



Islamophobia and its effects on British South Asian Muslims post 9/11.

Rumana Akhtar

Supervised by: Dr. Asiya Sidueqee

March 2011

Islamophobia and its effects on British South Asian Muslims post 9/11.

ABSTRACT

The situation of British South Asian Muslims has been highlighted by the events of September 11 and its aftermath. There has been a rise in Islamophobia in which Islam is described as 'inferior to the west, barbaric and irrational' (The Runnymede Trust, 1997). Previous research has shown a significant rise in Islamophobia, towards those who are easy to identify as Muslim (Allen & Nielson, 2002). Building upon past limited literature, this report is a qualitative study which then aimed to determine how British South Asian Muslims were affected by Islamophobia, living in the post 9/11 climate in Britain. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 British South Asian Muslims aged between 18-30. Thematic analysis was then utilised to interpret the findings, in order to determine the key themes and concepts common in the data. The findings demonstrated that participants had indeed been subject to the impact of Islamophobia in various ways. There were reports of experiencing prejudice (be it physical or verbal); and views on what it means to be a British South Asian Muslim in the 21st century, in the face of negative media portrayal, and being stigmatised with a negative label. There is also an increased awareness of religious identity.

KEY WORDS:	ISLAMOPHOBIA	BRITISH	SOUTH ASIAN	MUSLIM	THEMATIC ANALYSIS
-------------------	---------------------	----------------	--------------------	---------------	--------------------------

Introduction

General Overview

The events of September 11 triggered off the rise in Islamophobia which is described as 'the hatred of Islam and Muslims' (Jenkins, 2002). There have been other descriptions put forward such as: 'Islam is seen as unresponsive to change'; 'it is inferior to the West, barbaric and irrational' (The Runnymede Trust, 1997). Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices, towards Muslims and exclusions of Muslims from mainstream society (The Runnymede Trust, 1997). In recent years Islamophobia has become recognised as one of the clearest expressions of racial intolerance in a different and growing form (Marsh & Keating, 2006).

Racism & Islamophobia in the UK

Discrimination and prejudice has been a pressing issue in Britain since the first wave of immigration in the second half of the twentieth century. During the 1960s when politicians were voicing their views to the mass media and public, the treatment of immigrants became much more of a pressing issue. The politician Enoch Powell's views on immigrants upset many; but nonetheless it gave voice to racist organisations such as the National Front, who are still in existence today, to call for a repatriation of non-white immigrants such as South Asians (Connolly, 2006).

Regardless of government initiatives, Islamophobia certainly reached a peak in terms of actual physical violence in Britain in 2001. This was evident from the 'race riots' that erupted after racial tension in the Northern parts of England such as Oldham; Bradford and Burnley, where South Asian Muslims clashed with White residents (Pathak, 2008). The events of 9/11 unfortunately brought alive ethnic xenophobia too. 9/11 was a catalyst of old fears which was now a renewed and enhanced prejudice which scrutinised Muslims, as well as their ethnic backgrounds (Allen, 2004).

These riots fuelled support for the far-right, anti-immigration British national Party (BNP). Historically the BNP had focused the majority of its policies on race, but its leader Nick Griffin changed the party's discourse to religion. Griffin himself has stated that Britain 'does not have an Asian problem but a Muslim one' (Fetzer & Soper, 2005).

The British media has portrayed Muslims as the 'alien other' which has led to a development of racism, principally Islamophobia. The media has often followed-when trying to represent Muslims-themes of 'un-Britishness' (Saeed, 2007). Ignorance and comments about Islam and its followers have become 'part of the cultural and political climate to the extent that this is no longer the preserve of extreme elements like the British National Party' (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2004).

After the events of 9/11 the Prime Minister and Police condemned attacks on Muslims in Britain, but it did nothing to numb the media representation of the majority of Muslims as fanatics (Farmer, 2010). British South Asian Muslims certainly felt high levels of anxiety; which enhanced after the government legislations surrounding 'anti-terrorism', which has been perceived to 'infringe civil liberties, as well as be discriminately unfair against Muslims, a view which has been shared and voiced by both the Muslim and Non-Muslim community' (Ansari, 2005). It would appear that Islamophobia is not wholly centred on those who are ignorant and inherently racist, but the British government itself is displaying signs of institutional Islamophobia (Ansari & Karim, 2005). Another government legislation 'The terrorist Bill' of 2005 seems to deliberately target Muslims as 'the wholly Islamophobic manner in which this legislation has been operated is symbolic of the rise in institutional Islamophobia in the UK' (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2005).

South Asians in the UK & impact of Islamophobia & 9/11

There are approximately just under a million South Asian Muslims living in Britain today. The majority have been on the 'brunt of suspicion accompanied by hostility, and have had doubts cast at them regarding their loyalty as British citizens' (Abbas, 2005). It has all led to a question as to whether Muslims are capable of integrating in Britain and embracing 'positive national values' (Dimova-Cookson & Stirk 2009). South Asian Muslims are seen as 'segregating themselves on racial and religious grounds' (Bagguley & Hussain, 2008) which has led to a fresh debate on multiculturalism in Britain.

British Muslims are separated into two labels. One being the 'terrorist who hates the West and has declared a War to the death against them, and the other would be the role of the apologist who defends Islam and how it is simply a religion of peace' (Sardar, 2002). With regards to such labels the issue that has been raised by many non-Muslim commentators on Muslim communities in the non-Muslim world; has been whether Muslims can be trusted as fully loyal citizens, or whether their true allegiance lies elsewhere (Bennett, 2005). As a result of Islamophobia post 9/11 many feel they have 'no affiliations with Britain whatsoever and are forced to live here due to political and social factors' (Ameli & Merali, 2004). The consensus amongst British South Asian Muslims as a result of such labels is a feeling of 'not belonging here. It seems that British society has failed to deliver a sense of dignity and self-worth to many Muslim citizens' (Ameli & Merali, 2004). Modood (2005) states that due to a complicated mix of cultural racism, Islamophobia and an unexpected challenge to secular modernity, South Asian Muslims have come to be perceived as the 'other' that is most threatening to British society after 9/11.

Islamophobia in Britain in the post 9/11 atmosphere has led to a fear of racist attacks and a rising discrimination against British South Asian Muslims in particular (Pain & Smith, 2008). Ethnic minorities have been at the receiving end of increased racist sentiments, which have been fuelled by Islamophobia (Sivandan, 2006). Popular discourses in the media have led to an association between Islam and terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, and many South Asians find

their everyday lives to be risky due to this association (Van der Veer, 2004). In Britain the combination of moral panic about Islam, the popular media and new laws and security measures have provoked a rising sense of alienation among South Asian Muslims (Pain & Smith, 2008).

Werbner (2004) argues that South Asian Muslims felt stigmatised as never before. There was a resentment; fear, a feeling of being perceived as unwanted outsiders, due to being associated with terror and being viewed with suspicion. Pain & Smith (2008) found that young South Asians in particular stated that September 11 had resulted in 'scary' consequences; and that discrimination and ethnic segregation had increased indicating how this global event had affected their everyday lives, due to its interpretations by British politicians and the media.

While Islamophobia cannot solely be blamed on 9/11, the terrorist attacks since have accelerated the process of 'spiralling progressive alienation' of Muslims in the West (Werbner, 2004). This has been highlighted by McGhee (2005) that there was a four-fold increase in the number of racist attacks reported by British South Asian Muslims; ostensibly 'Muslim looking' groups in the UK, with South Asians based in the Tower Hamlets district of London, experiencing 75 percent increase in attacks the aftermath of 9/11 (Chakraborti & Garland, 2009).

Conclusion & critique

The research on the effects of Islamophobia was very limited; whereby the psychological studies focused more on identity conflict, as opposed to a broad overview of the impact. Certain studies looked at the experiences of a particular group; such as university students, the younger generation, or just South Asian women, rather than the impact of Islamophobia on all South Asian Muslims in general. Consequently it was not always possible to discover what they all felt as it was only one groups voice. Therefore taking this into consideration the current research will investigate the effects of Islamophobia on British South Asian Muslims after the events of September 11th. This ethnic group of Muslims was chosen as opposed to Middle Eastern Muslims for example, as South Asians are the earliest migrants into Britain which started in the 1950s (Evans & Bowlby, 2000). Thus feelings and experiences of living as a British South Asian Muslim were explored. The assessment of this was measured by carrying out interviews, where participants were asked twenty questions regarding their experiences and feelings post 9/11. The findings were consequently analysed through the use of thematic analysis. The investigation intended to discover whether the British South Asian Muslim participants experienced Islamophobia, and any such negative outlet from the non-Muslim British public.

Method

Design

Qualitative methods aim to provide rich and detailed accounts of the topic under investigation. As the research was specifically to explore human experience, therefore it was deemed that qualitative methods were the most appropriate

method of data collection. Qualitative methods allow a degree of control over the viewpoint of participants, while quantitative methods are concerned with objective stimuli and measurable responses (Coolican, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were also used as it is the method that is most popular and widely used in areas of qualitative research. These forms of interviews allow the exploration of issues that may be considered too complex to investigate, through quantitative means (Banister *et al*, 1994).

Semi-structured interviews allow relaxed, verbal communication to take place between the researcher and participant. With regards to qualitative data, ethnomethodology is considered to be an approach that assists in understanding, how social order can be created through conversation and interaction (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008). The interviews followed the 'rapport' type (Massarik, 1981) in which uncovering personal experiences is the ultimate objective of the researcher.

Materials

The materials that were used through the interview process consisted of the interview schedule and questions; as well as a Dictaphone in order to record the interview from which interview transcripts were then created. A consent form (see appendix 1 for consent form) was presented to the participants in order to inform the participants of their rights; and for them to sign as proof of their willing participation. A debriefing sheet (see appendix 2 for debriefing sheet) presented to participants included contact details, if they were interested in pursuing the outcome of the study.

A specific criterion was designed in order to make the research as relevant as possible which was that the participants had to be aged between 18 and 30 years old; British, South Asian and Muslim.

Participants who took part in the study

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Background</u>
Zak	24	British Muslim Bangladeshi
Shazna	27	British Muslim Bangladeshi
Momotaz	19	British Muslim Bangladeshi
Hamida	25	British Pakistani Muslim
Razia	18	British Muslim Bangladeshi

Imran	22	British Pakistani Muslim
Abdul	19	British Pakistani Muslim
Kabir	27	British Muslim Bangladeshi
Malik	19	British Muslim Bangladeshi
Rehana	22	British Muslim Bangladeshi

Quantitative research would have made use of a greater number of participants, but the recruitment of 10 participants was deemed appropriate enough (5 males and 5 females). Participants were recruited via opportunity sampling. A suitable time and place to conduct the interview was arranged. Interviews took place in the homes of the participants, and some in the researcher's home.

Research setting

Creating an informal and friendly atmosphere was easy to achieve while conducting the interviews, as some of the participants were friends and family. Thus they could talk without any discomfort and provide rich, detailed answers. Creating the questions for the interview was straightforward, due to the research conducted into surrounding literature. Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe interview schedules to provide a framework, guiding the research process and allowing the researcher to cover significant aspects from previous research.

Procedure

The interview was divided so that the first section covered demographics about the participant such as age and ethnicity. The second set of questions looked at identity, religion, and family background. Questions regarding friends; education, work and so on were also asked. The interview covered questions about experiences post 9/11; and whether it affected the way they identify themselves in public, their personal beliefs etc. Topics on media portrayal of Islam; backlash, racism and terrorism were also mentioned. (See appendix 3 for the interview schedule).

The participants were asked to fill in a consent form (see appendix 1 for consent form); and were then debriefed at the end with all necessary information on paper alongside the researchers contact details (see appendix 2 for debriefing sheet), should they have any further queries.

Participants were informed the interview would be recorded using a Dictaphone, and were encouraged to answer as freely as possible. Establishing a rapport was

imperative to facilitate the participants' confidence in the researcher (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The interviews were then transcribed and analysed using qualitative data analysis strategies, in the form of thematic analysis which is 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of the data involved immersing one's self into the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each interview transcript was read and analysed a number of times, to determine if there were any similarities in the participants' responses. A theme was then identified based on the responses, to the questions asked. In total six main themes were identified with either two or three sub-themes. The reviewing of the themes was an ongoing process to provide a coherent account of the data received.

Ethics

BPS ethical guidelines were taken into consideration when the research was conducted (see appendix 4 for ethics forms). The participants' confidentiality was not breached as all the detail from the interviews has been confidential. The anonymity of the participants has been guaranteed as the participants name was not requested, and they are referred to with pseudonyms. The only information requested was 'age', 'gender' and signature as proof of their willing participation in the research. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point from the study. The consent form (see appendix 1 for consent form) also consists of the aim of the study and the rights of the participants, thus ensuring that deception did not take place.

Results/ Data Analysis

Method of analysis

Thematic analysis was the chosen method of data analysis, as it allows flexibility within the approach and analysis of complex data. Thematic analysis concerns essentialist methods as it is predominantly concerned with exploring experiences, meaning and reality of the participants concerned. The themes discerned indicate relevant issues within the data, in relation to the research question which then represents a patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Face to face interview transcripts were used to outline key themes, which are presented under distinct sub-headings.

Awareness of identity post 9/11

Participants were asked about their identity and the impact of 9/11 on this (see appendix 5 for transcript of interview)¹. As all the participants were South Asian, they confirmed their nationalities, but also stated their religion and British nationality:

¹ For further evidence of theme see transcripts on CD-ROM

"I am a British South Asian Muslim" (Rehana, 22 years, P 7).

"I would say I am a British born Bangladeshi Muslim" (Kabir, 27 years, P 7).

Castell's (1997) theory of Nationalist identity supports this element as participants displayed parts of this identity through maintaining national traditions, and their previous British status. These young people, by mentioning their religion feel they belong to the religious community (Atkin & Hussain, 2003). The consensus with all the participants was that their identity had not changed after 9/11:

"...I was a Muslim before 9/11, and I am a Muslim now after 9/11" (Momotaz, 19 years, P 17).

"...No matter what anyone says I will always have my identity..." (Abdul, 19 years, P17).

Participants consistently stated Islam is an important aspect of their identity, indicating an increased recognition of the significance of religious identity (Samad, 1992).

Participants were asked if they had questioned religious identity:

"No never, because nothing can compromise the fact that I am a Muslim" (Razia, 18 years, P 23).

"I've never questioned my identity" (Zak, 19 years, P 23).

Participants are aware of their religious identity. Second and subsequent generations of Muslims are reclaiming their religious identity and rediscovering Islam (Abbas, 2005). This reflects a wider process occurring where religion has risen in importance as a distinct identity (Ahmed & Donnon, 1994).

Coexistence of three identities: British, South Asian and Muslim

Participants agreed it is possible to have multiple identities:

"...an Asian person who was born in the UK...your religion is Islam... it's possible to be all three" (Zak, 24 years, Paragraph (P) 11).

"... I'm an Asian, my religion is Islam... I was born in England...so yes it's possible..." (Momotaz, 19 years, P 11).

This supports Castell's (1997) theory of hybrid identity whereby identity is influenced by two main factors. The participants will have this mixture of identities as they have a religious root and ethnic root.

Religious attachment was indicated, when participants were asked about the role of religion in identity:

"... the way I live my life is according to my religion" (Zak, 24 years, P 9).

"Yeah absolutely. It plays a big part in my identity..." (Malik, 19 years, P 9).

Religion is a major determining factor in identity. This could be the case amongst second generation South Asian Muslims; as a reaction to the rising prejudice since 9/11, which has led to their deeper understanding of Islam.

Participants made the choice to be a blend of Asian, British and Muslim without being forced to choose:

"I don't think I've ever been forced to choose..." (Malik, 19 years, P 13).

"...My identity means being British, Asian and most importantly a Muslim" (Rehana, 22 years, P 13).

Participants stated they are not forced to choose identities. Identity is influenced through faith and culture, however there is a sense that religion may play the strongest role in identity. The second generation is increasingly laying claim to the significance of being South Asian and Muslim (Rajan & Sharma, 2006).

The participants all displayed a consensus on being proud of their identity:

"I'm proud of my heritage, I'm proud of my religion as well as being British" (Zak, 19 years, P 41).

"...Being British, Asian and Muslim is my identity, and nothing will change that" (Imran, 22 years, P 41).

The racialisation of religion in Britain has contributed to a contradictory image of Muslims. The South Asians of late have come to be depicted as traditional and religious, as well as posing a terrorist threat to civil society (Law *et al*, 2004). The participants displayed pride in their heritage, religion and being British.

External influences on identity

The consensus was that while peers have more influence than colleagues, identity is still an individual element:

"No I don't think anyone has such a great influence on me that they'll be able to influence my identity..." (Abdul, 19 years, P 15).

"...my identity doesn't change because of the influence they have" (Hamida, 25 years, P 15).

Participants were firm that no one can influence their identity. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, religion national language or culture (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000).

Participants were asked if they felt as though they did not want to be identified as Muslim post 9/11:

"Not really...a minority of extremists does not mean the entire Muslim faith" (Rehana, 22 years, P 35).

"I don't see the need to do that... you should be proud of who you are" (Zak, 24 years, P 35).

After 9/11 many Muslims reported feeling victimised and constantly under suspicion (Crandall, 2008). Among young British Muslims, Islam is a primary facet of identity and the participants expressed this. The prejudice that Muslims have felt has not deterred the participants from identifying themselves as Muslim (Quirk *et al*, 2010).

The topic of hiding religious identity amongst friends was explored:

“...it’s very easy to identify me as a Muslim, because I wear a headscarf ...but I don’t think I’d ever hide it...” (Rehana, 22 years, P 33).

“...If a friend treats me differently because of the fact that I am a Muslim...I don’t think they’re a friend” (Abdul, 19 years, P 33).

Participants gave similar answers stating they would not hide religion amongst friends. There is a strong sense of religious identity amongst the participants. ‘Muslims have shown worries and anxieties about their family; especially those who are easily identifiable as Muslim post 9/11, as Islamophobia has taken a stance in many Western societies’ (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

Labelling post 9/11

Labelling is a key theme as participants felt they had been labelled post 9/11. The labels are verbal and guilt by association:

“...all Muslims and Islam has been labelled as a religion of hate and violence...” (Abdul, 19 years, P29).

“...9/11 proved that labelling still occurs... they will label you, for being from the same religion... they will be racist towards you for something that you’ve got nothing to do with...” (Hamida, 25 years, P 29)

Contemporary Muslims are identified as extremists; terrorists, or apologists who are trying to defend their religion. Many make references to attempts by the West to categorise Muslims so as to distinguish between terrorists at one extreme and those who are acceptable in the Western context. The perception of Islam is that it is against and hostile to the Western world, and this has gained ground since 9/11 (Geaves *et al*, 2004).

Participants were asked if they had experienced prejudice and discrimination post 9/11:

“...I was walking through town ...White boys started pelting us with stones, and shouting...you terrorist bomber...” (Razia, 18 years, P 31).

“There have been so many, ... 9/11 plays a big part in that just for being Muslim...” (Hamida, 25 years, P 31).

Participants agreed in the decade since 9/11 occurred, they had experienced some form of prejudice or discrimination either verbally or physically owing to their Muslim identity. Ameli *et al* (2004) found that about 80% of Muslims in Britain have experienced discrimination because they were Muslim.

To further investigate living with this negative label, participants were asked what it meant to be a British Asian Muslim in the 21st century:

“It’s definitely hard being Asian and Muslim...it’s harder than it used to be, and 9/11 is the cause” (Abdul, 19 years, P37).

“It’s really hard, you’re always having to be politically correct in case you offend someone with your views. Freedom of speech it appears, is not applied to us anymore” (Rehana, 22 years, P 37).

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11th anti-Muslim sentiment and assaults on Muslims have intensified (Quraishi, 2005). This may explain why these participants say it is hard to live as a British Asian Muslim in the 21st century.

Media portrayal

The participants were asked about media impact regarding British Asian Muslims post 9/11:

“...make out as if we’re all terrorists...always to do with violence, and Muslims bombing non-Muslims but they don’t mention the good stuff...” (Razia, 19 years, P 25).

“The media portrays Islam and Muslims in a very negative light. It’s had a role in kicking off Islamophobia...” (Kabir, 27 years, P 25).

The participants all agreed that the media conveys Islam and Muslims in a negative light, and that the media circulates misunderstandings. This would lead to people who possess little knowledge of Islam, believing that the majority of Muslims are extremists. Previous research has shown that Muslims feel that the media is one of the major contributing factors, which causes social discrimination between them and society (Ameli, 2007).

Participants were also asked if they thought that the public’s views on Muslims had changed post 9/11:

“Before nobody bothered about which religion you followed, but after 9/11 if you’re Muslim then automatically it’s assumed you’re some kind of extremist...” (Kabir, 27 years, P 21).

“...now people hear the word Muslim and they just associate it with terrorism” (Razia, 18 years, P 21).

The participants agreed that the public perception of Muslims and Islam has changed dramatically post 9/11. European states have restructured and strengthened their security and anti-terrorism laws, to combat Muslim terrorists. The responses of the public and the government have had major effects on Muslims in Europe (Cesari, 2010).

In light of what the participants said was a negative perception of Muslims that the majority of the public have; and the negative image the media attaches to Muslims, they were asked how they feel about being Muslim post 9/11:

"I don't think my identity has changed, but I feel my faith more strongly because I have to protect it and maintain it" (Rehana, 22 years, P 19).

"Nothing's really changed. I still feel proud to be Muslim. I don't really see why I shouldn't..." (Abdul, 19 years, P 19).

The participants displayed that they are not ashamed to identify themselves as Muslims. They feel disheartened as there are now a lot of misunderstandings about Islam and its followers.

Relationship with religion post 9/11

The participants were asked if they had felt detached from Islam since 9/11:

"I know that terrorism is not encouraged in Islam so 9/11 hasn't changed my feelings towards my religion" (Razia, 18 years, P 39).

"Never. 9/11 has got me closer to my religion actually..." (Kabir, 27 years, P 39).

Participants showed detachment from religion had not taken place. In some cases, the relationship with Islam had become stronger after 9/11.

Participants were also asked if 9/11 had affected their relationship with religion:

"No it didn't. It made it stronger..." (Imran, 22 years, P 45).

"The only way that it had any effect was by making my relationship stronger than it was before" (Shazna, 27 years, P 45).

Participants are much more aware of their religious identity. As the second generation of Muslims are fluent in English, they have the ability to conduct further research and are strengthening their relationship with Islam post 9/11. This awareness and strengthening is reconfirming and redefining their religious roots (Abbas, 2005).

Participants were asked if they felt guilty for the events of 9/11:

"No, because Islam doesn't agree with what the terrorists responsible for 9/11 did..." (Imran, 22 years, P 43).

"Not guilty... If anything I feel angry..." (Razia, 18 years, P 43).

The participants displayed anger rather than guilt at those responsible for 9/11. The participants felt those responsible should be regarded as murderers who acted against Islam.

Discussion

Summary of themes linked to literature

Six main themes were identified, which had two or three sub-themes (see appendix 6 for analysis plan). Firstly the participants had a strong awareness of identity post 9/11. This was expressed through the confirmation of their nationalities as well as stating religion and British nationality. The second theme recognised was the coexistence of three identities: British, South Asian and Muslim. This was indicated through their religious attachments, how it was their choice to be a blend of 3 identities and displaying a consensus that they were proud of their identity. The third theme outlined was external influences on identity; this was exhibited through the discussion of whether peers or colleagues had an influence on their identity, or if the participants had ever hidden their religious identity from friends. The fourth theme identified was labelling post 9/11. This labelling was verbal, physical or being held guilty through association. Participants voiced their thoughts through the discussion of experiencing prejudice and discrimination post 9/11; alongside what it felt like to live as a British South Asian Muslim in the 21st century. The fifth theme acknowledged was media portrayal of Islam and Muslims. The public's view of Muslims and whether it had changed after 9/11 was considered as was how the participants felt like to be a Muslim post 9/11. Finally, the last theme determined was the relationship with religion post 9/11. Participants discussed how their relationship with Islam was affected, and whether they had experienced any feelings of guilt towards the 9/11 attacks.

Some of the themes do support the literature regarding the topic of British South Asian Muslim identity; in particular hybrid identity, the negative portrayal of the media, the experiences of prejudice and discrimination and labelling. All of the participants displayed characteristics of hybrid identity (Castell 1997) as they all described themselves as: British, South Asian and Muslim. They had two roots in the sense that cultural traditions were upheld, and they also identified themselves as British. However what was apparent from the statements made was that participants were more aware of their religious identity. This could be a result of a number of factors such as the negative media portrayal of Islam; and the fact that some had been verbally or physically abused due to their religious identity, and that negative labelling of Muslims is believed by the participants, to be prevalent in society post 9/11. 'Increased attention on Muslim populations has meant that individuals and communities have found themselves the focus of public interest' (Abbas, 2005) which can also account for the negative labelling of Islam and Muslims post 9/11, as a result of increased public interest and negative media portrayal. Participants displayed a consensus that the media circulates a negative image of Islam whereby Muslims are always represented as un-British (Saeed, 2007).

While the data analysis has been supported by the surrounding literature in that the research question was answered, further insight was also made into the topic of British South Asian Muslim identity discourse. Multiculturalism has been an issue in the limelight post 9/11, as many South Asian Muslims are seen to segregate themselves on racial and religious grounds (Bagguley & Hussain, 2008). However the fact that this group are being viewed in this sense, could

simply be that young South Asian Muslims are experiencing the identity discourse in a subtle way. Modood *et al* (1994) stated that young South Asian people in the UK understand their religious and ethnic roots within the British culture; in that they wish to celebrate their ethnic, cultural and religious differences in relationship with those of wider society. In the post 9/11 atmosphere this could be a part of multiculturalist rhetoric, ideology and philosophy (Abbas, 2005).

The experiences of prejudice be it verbal or physical does support the literature in this area, as many participants stated that they had been on the receiving end of such intolerance. This supports what McGhee (2005) found to be a four-fold increase in the number of racist attacks reported by British South Asian Muslims, in the UK in the post 9/11 climate.

Limitations of research

There are limitations to consider for this piece of research. The qualitative nature of this study has allowed for an in depth exploration of the human experience. However the subjective experience of the individuals cannot be generalised to other areas. If this study were to be conducted elsewhere in Britain it may provide varying results to this. The different geographical areas in Britain have had its own issues before, as have the habitants within them. Consequently it cannot be assumed that British South Asian Muslims from different parts of Britain will have some type of identity discourse; or that they will have experienced similar things to the participants in this study or that they will share the same views at all. Another limitation of detailed generalisation is that the majority of the participants used were Bangladeshi. Due to the opportunistic sampling, it was easier to have contact with people of this ethnic group. Nonetheless the answers provided by the Bangladeshi participants cannot be correlated to the views or experiences of other British Bangladeshi Muslims. Similarly the British Pakistani participants' answers cannot be associated with other British Pakistani Muslims, as everyone has their own opinions. Thus generalisation in this context is more in terms of particular groups or areas, as opposed to the wider population.

Future research

Research to be pursued in the future would possibly make use of quantitative methodologies, and a longitudinal structure with emphasis placed upon the experiences of British South Asian Muslims from a different part of Britain; or even studying the identities of a complete different group such as Middle-Eastern Muslims, or Black Muslims as there are more than 106,000 in Britain (Abbas, 2005). Therefore it would be relevant to see how this ethnic group has been affected by Islamophobia in the aftermath of 9/11. This may allow for a greater influx of participants to be used. Different areas in Britain have been affected by 9/11, it would be interesting to see how Islamophobia has affected individuals and communities. Future research can also look at the experiences of other religious groups. Many 'Muslim looking' groups were attacked in the UK post 9/11 (Chakraborti & Garland, 2009). In the backlash occurring after 9/11 there was an increase in targeting people of the Sikh religion (Allen, 2010), due to the visual

similarity of the turbans the males wear to that of the turbans worn by some Muslim men and of course Osama Bin Laden whose picture was constantly circulated by the media (van Driel, 2004). Sikh places of worship, the 'gurdwara' were also vandalised by being mistaken for mosques. Subsequently this could prove to be an interesting and relevant topic to pursue for further research into the effects of Islamophobia post 9/11.

Implications

The results of this study imply that young British South Asian Muslims identify themselves in terms of their religious identity, and have become much more aware of it after 9/11. This is a combination of the rise in attacks on Muslims because of their religious identity, the negative label that has been attached to Islam as well as the media portrayal of Muslims. In order to bring the government policy and legislation outlined in the Race Relations Act of 1976, further research into this area could bring to the front and help the subsequent generations of British born Muslims (South Asians and other ethnicities).

Conclusion

This study has provided an insight into the experiences of British South Asian Muslims after 9/11 and the impact of Islamophobia. Participants provided similar answers, i.e. when describing personal identity. While some answers were brief others were detailed. The findings indicated that religion combined with ethnicity, is a determining factor in what participants experienced. This introduced the issue of racism; which has been prevalent in Britain long before Islamophobia took precedence, in issues of abuse.

The overwhelming findings specified participants had been subject to some abuse, whether on a small scale or otherwise. Islamophobia has had an impact on the lives of British South Asian Muslims in various ways. Researchers are members of society restricted by cultural context (Ancis, 2004). As the participants were of the same background as myself; cultural ethnocentrism whereby culture is judged by one's own culture, (Andersen & Taylor, 2009) may have been an influential factor in the conclusions drawn. Cultural ethnocentrism is difficult to avoid, as self-reflections and critical awareness seriously challenging ethnocentrism is not easy to achieve (Alvesson & Sköldböck, 2009).

The three categories of being Muslim, South Asian and British are all linked together. There are many drawbacks in this area; -that any future study should be aware of - such as citizenship issues, and the fact that this group are now becoming more aware of their religious identity. In a non-Muslim society they have had to live as a minority, and learn how to adapt to living as a Muslim in a secular society. In the face of negative media portrayal; labelling, verbal and physical attacks, such negative influences have led to a positive outcome, in that British South Asian Muslims are becoming much more aware of their identity, and are proud of all aspects of their identity that is being British, South Asian and Muslim.

Reflexive Analysis

Introduction

Reflexivity is a way of working with subjectivity so that we are able to break out of the self-referential circle that characterises most academic work (Parker, 2005). The researcher's preconceptions may influence the direction of the results, due to their control of the rigorous analysis of data. Reflexivity allows an 'acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research' (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

I am a third year Psychology undergraduate student with a vested interest in my research topic. I found literature surrounding the area quite limited; and wanted to create an understanding of how British South Asian Muslims, were affected by Islamophobia living in the post 9/11 atmosphere in Britain. There were a variety of issues such as labelling, racism and identity, which were all influential elements as to why I wanted to address this issue. As a British South Asian Muslim myself, I have seen Islam be abused by the media in many forms; as well as associating it with negativity. In relation to that I have experienced minor struggles about my own identity. Personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon ways in which our own values, experience, social identities have shaped the research (Willig, 2001). My emotional investment within the issue may have influenced my role of researcher. My judgement may have may influenced the research, as I am personally acquainted with some of the participants who took part in the study.

Complexity of position and role constraints

In the context of the research, my role was of researcher. However at times my identity differed depending on whether the participant was a sibling, relative or friend. Nonetheless I carried out the interview in a formal manner. This aided me to differentiate the roles, as well as fulfilling the role of researcher. As such there were no role constraints as all of the participants were willing to take part in the research, and they also showed an interest in the research question. I found that an informal atmosphere during interviews was simple to achieve (see appendix 7 for extract of research diary). A research diary helps to provide space and time within which to be reflexive (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Therefore the participants were able to answer the questions and talk comfortably and freely, providing rich and detailed answers.

Rapport should be achieved as it can strengthen the ecological validity of the study and participants co-operate (Glinger & Morgan, 2000). It was possible for me to build a rapport with the participants during the interview process, as I already knew some of them on a personal level. Some of the answers the participants provided were brief, compared to some of the detailed answers of the participants. Participants gave detailed answers possibly due to the trust vested in the researcher, as we were already familiar with each other. Participants may have provided the selective answers; as a result of not wanting to relive any negative, or traumatic memories participants experienced as a result of Islamophobia.

References

- Abbas, T. (Ed.) (2005). *Muslim Britain: Communities under pressure*. Great Britain: Biddles Ltd.
- Ahmed, A. S. & Donnan, H. (Ed.) (1994). *Islam, Globalisation and Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Allen, C. (2004). Justifying Islamophobia: A post-9/11 Consideration of the European Union and British Contexts. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*.
- Allen, C. (2010). *Islamophobia*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative research* (2nd edn). UK: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ameli, S.R., Elahi, M. & Merali, A. (2004). *Social Discrimination: Across the Muslim Divide*. Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission.
- Ameli, S. R. & Merali, A. (2004). *Hijab, meaning, identity, otherization and politics: British Muslim Women*. Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission.
- Ameli, S. R. (2007). *British Muslim expectation of the Government: the British media and Muslim representation: the ideology of demonization*. Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission.
- Ancis, J. R. (Ed.) (2009). *Culturally responsive interventions: innovative approaches to working with diverse populations*. East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge.
- Andersen, M. L. & Taylor, H. F. (2009). *Sociology: The Essentials*. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Ansari, F. (2005). *British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-hunt*. Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission.
- Ansari, F. & Karim, U. (2005). *Hijab & democracy: the ways of, and against secular fundamentalism*. Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission.
- Atkin, T. & Hussain, Y. (2003). Disability and ethnicity: how young Asian disabled people make sense of their lives. In S. Riddell & N. Watson (Eds.) *Disability, Culture & Identity*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Bagguley, P. & Hussain, Y. (2008). *Riotous citizens: ethnic conflict in multicultural Britain*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative Methods In Psychology A Research Guide*. Berkshire: Open University press.
- Bennet, C. (2005). *Muslims and modernity: an introduction to the issues and debates*. London: Continuum.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S. J. (1975). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A phenomenal approach to the Social Sciences*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Castells, M. (1997). *The information of age: Economy, Society & Culture Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Cesari, J. (Ed.) (2010). *Muslims in the West after 9/11: Religion, Politics and Law*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Chakraboti, N. & Garland, J. (2009). *Hate Crime: Impact, Causes and Responses*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Crandall, R. C. (2008). *Islam: The enemy*. USA: Xulonpress.
- Coolican, H. (2006). *Introduction to research methods in Psychology* (3rd edn). Oxon: Hodder Arnold.
- Connolly, S. (2006). *Racial and Ethnic Equality*. United States: Smart Apple Media.
- Dimova-Cookson, M. & Stirk, P.M. R. (Eds.) (2009). *Multiculturalism and moral conflict*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Evans, S. L. & Bowlby, S. (2000). Crossing boundaries. *Women's studies international forum*, 23, 461-474.
- Farmer, B. R. (2010). *Radical Islam in the West: Ideology and Challenge*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Fetzer, J. S. & Soper, J. C. (2005). *Muslims and the state in Britain, France and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geaves, R., Gabriel, T., Haddad, Y. & Smith, J. I. (Eds.) (2004). *Islam and the West*. Great Britain: TJ International Ltd.
- Glinger, J. A. & Morgan, G. A. (2000). *Research Methods in Applied Settings: An Integrated Approach to Design and Analysis*. USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (Ed) (2008). *Handbook of Constructionist research*. New York: The Guilford Press
- Jenkins, J. (2002). *Contemporary moral issues* (4th edn). Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Kymlicka, W. & Norman, W. (Eds.) (2000). *Citizenship in diverse societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Law, I., Phillips, D. & Turney, L. (Ed.) (2004). *Institutional racism in higher education*. London: Trentham Books Limited.
- Marsh, I. & Keating, M. (2006). *Sociology: making sense of society* (3rd edn). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

- Massarik, F. (1981). The interviewing process re-examined. In: Reason, P. And Rowan, J. (Eds). *Human Inquiry: A source book of new paradigm research*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Mauthner, N. S. & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37, 413-431.
- McGhee, D. (2005). *Intolerant Britain? Hate, Citizenship and Difference*. UK: Open University Press.
- Modood, T. (2005). *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain*. UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Nightingale, C., & Cromby, J. (1999). *Social constructionist psychology*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Pain, R. & Smith, S. J. (Eds.) (2008). *Fear: critical geopolitics and everyday life*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative Psychology*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Pathak, P. (2008). *The future of multicultural Britain: confronting the progressive dilemma*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Quirk, H., Seddon, T. & Smith, G. (2010). *Regulation and Criminal Justice: Innovations in Policy and Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quraishi, M. (2005). *Muslims and crime: A comparative study*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Rajan, G. & Sharma, S. (Ed.) (2006). *New Cosmopolitanisms*. Sanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. California: Sage.
- Runnymede Trust (1997). *Islamophobia: a Challenge for us all*. London: Runnymede Trust.
- Saeed, A. (2007). Media, Racism and Islamophobia: The representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media. *Sociology Compass*, 1, 443-462.
- Samad, Y. (1992). Book burning and race relations: political mobilisation of Asians in Bradford. *New Community*, Vol XV111, No IV.
- Sardar, Z. (2002). The excluded minority: British Muslims identity after 11 September. In Griffith, P. & Leonard, M. (Eds) *Reclaiming Britishness*. London: Foreign Policy Centre.
- Sirin, S. R. & Fine, M. (2008). *Muslim American Youth*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sivandan, A. (2006). Race, Terror and Civil Society. *Race and Class*, 47, 1-8.

Van der Veer, P. (2004). South Asian Islam in Britain. *Ethnicities*, 4, 135-146.
Werbner, P. (2004). The Predicament of Diaspora and Millennial Islam: Reflections on September 11, 2001. *Ethnicities*, 4, 451-476.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd edn). UK: Open University Press.