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**Contesting 'Cultural Hybridity': An Empirical Challenge from
Two Case Studies Among South Asians in Britain**

**A thesis submitted to Middlesex University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers how successfully contemporary theories of 'cultural hybridity' can afford a position from which to identify possibilities for 'racially transgressive cultural change' within modern societies. To tackle this question, the thesis assesses the work of four influential cultural theorists (Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Ali Rattansi) in the context of everyday, lived cultural realities. Two empirical studies conducted among South Asians in Britain are also presented: one examines trends in consumption of films on videotape; the other investigates negotiations of *being* Muslim.

Data from the two studies show how negotiations of fragmented cultural experiences may in fact reinforce racial and cultural hierarchies as much as generate 'new', non-racialised cultural outlooks. Interrogating these empirical findings, the thesis proposes a distinction between two models of cross-cultural interaction: one model represents fixed interdependency of axes of difference, which results in 'exclusive' cultural identities; the other illustrates how axes of difference can influence each other's meaning without becoming interdependent, leaving open possibilities for the renegotiation of multiple co-ordinates of identity.

In identifying the prospects for progressive cultural change the two studies underscore a need to extend hybridity theorists' preoccupation with 'migrant' cultures. The findings suggest that, until the dynamics and principles of 'cultural hybridity' are contested from the perspective of indigenous Western populations, the work of hybridity theorists will remain unable to provide an adequate framework for promoting racially transgressive cultural change.

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Introduction

The colonising mission of the British empire established 'race' as a pivotal marker for categorising human beings and making sense of their social and physiological differences. Since then, the organisation of 'races' along a superior/inferior continuum has provided the ideological foundation for a variety of racisms. Pseudoscientific racisms, which dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, presented biological differences to justify British rule in Asia and Africa¹. More recently, 'common sense' or 'new' racisms have shifted the focus to cultural differences to circumvent feelings of racial superiority/inferiority². Underlying all these racist ideologies is the conception of 'races' as distinct incompatible wholes. Against this trend, a group of intellectuals, who are referred to throughout this thesis as 'hybridity theorists', have sought to re-think dominant representations of 'race'. Their work develops understanding of the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' to highlight 'race' as an open signifier asserting that a person's racial identity acquires meaning through interaction with other co-ordinates of identity. Over the last fifteen years the work of hybridity theorists has become firmly established as an alternative framework to mutually exclusive conceptions of 'race' and racial boundaries. This thesis examines theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity', and assesses whether they can be productively mobilised to identify a counter discourse to essentialist notions of 'race'.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is drawn from the work of four contributors to contemporary debates about 'cultural hybridity' – Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Ali Rattansi. Critical contestation of their respective conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' is undertaken in the context of two case studies. The studies comprise empirical investigations into two contrasting aspects of South Asian cultures in Britain. The first study constitutes an audience survey examining patterns of taste

¹see for example, Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, (London, Pluto Press, 1984)
Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, (New York, Cornell University Press, 1985)
Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, (Bristol, Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd, 1971)

²see for example, Martin Barker, *The New Racism*, (London, Junction Books Ltd, 1981)
Errol Lawrence, 'Just plain common sense: the 'roots' of racism', in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (London, Hutchinson, 1982), pp47-94

and consumption of popular/mainstream³ and Indian films⁴ on videotape. The second empirical study investigates the trend amongst significant numbers of young Muslims of foregrounding Islam in defining and structuring their everyday lives. Four observations clarify the contemporary significance of my overall research framework and its value for contesting established structures and conceptions of 'race'.

Firstly, hybridity theorists argue that identities be interrogated within a broader and ongoing process of cultural mutation and change. More specifically, they examine the concepts of 'diaspora' and 'hybridity' to describe how identities are situated in a complex web of interlocking histories and fractured experiences of not just 'race' but multiple axes of difference including gender, class, and sexuality. This is more attuned to the dynamics of modern societies and their impact on the individual's 'sense of self'. For instance, the deregulation of the marketplace has accelerated global interdependence, and the related phenomena of migration and global mass media have made the intermixing of cultures commonplace. This in turn has produced a pluralisation of sources of identity⁵. Acknowledging the strengths of these arguments, the thesis draws on the work of hybridity theorists as presenting a more appropriate framework for examining modern identities than more established conceptions of 'race', which seek to contain identities to fixed origins.

Secondly, growing disquiet towards the two ideological approaches, of multiculturalism and anti-racism, that dominated the British 'race' relations industry during the 1980s can be identified as an important precursor to the work of hybridity theorists. The character and limits of both approaches have been well documented elsewhere⁶. In sum, multiculturalism presented racial inequalities as an outcome of

³The term popular/mainstream is used to refer to texts from mainstream British film culture.

⁴The term Indian films is used to refer to texts from popular Indian film culture.

⁵Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991)
Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in Modernity and its Future, edited by S. Hall, D. Held & T. McGrew, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), pp274-316

⁶see for example, Stephen May, ed., Critical Multiculturalism, (London, Falmer Press, 1999)
Peter Braham, Ali Rattansi and Richard Skellington, eds, Racism and Antiracism, (London, Sage, 1992)
Sohan Modgil, Gajendra K. Verma, Kanka Mallick and Celia Modgil, eds, Multicultural Education, (London, Taylor Francis, 1986)
Peter Foster, Policy and Practice in Multicultural and Antiracist Education, (London, Routledge, 1990)

lack of understanding between distinct *unmeltable* cultural groups and thereby reinforced mutually exclusive cultural boundaries. Anti-racism framed the struggle against racism in terms of inequalities in socio-economic circumstances between blacks and whites and thus accentuated boundaries of skin colour. Both models could accordingly be seen to operate within the same reductive framework of 'race' that underlies all racisms⁷ - the very framework they were struggling against⁸. Addressing the limitations of these two approaches, hybridity theorists have reformulated the long-term anti-racist objective as developing fresh perspectives of 'race' for conceptualising more equal human relations. Indeed the texts examined in chapter 2 form part of a larger body of work which since the late 1980s has received considerable commentary and debate contesting its value as a unique position from which to re-think modern experiences of 'race'.

Thirdly, popular debates of theories of 'cultural hybridity' have tended to focus on its most innovative themes of 'cultural fragmentation' and 'fusion of distinct cultural forms'. This trend has not only created a new binary between 'old' and 'new' identities but left theories of hybridity vulnerable to reductive misreadings emphasising 'the resilience of black youth multicultures overcoming adversity to

Ali Rattansi, 'Racism, Culture and Education', in *Race', Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage 1992), pp11-48

Paul Gilroy, 'The End of Anti-Racism', in *Race', Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage 1992), pp49-61

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Racialised Boundaries*, (London, Routledge, 1992), see especially chapter 6

⁷The point that all racisms propose a division between two or more groups should be distinguished from the idea that all racisms are the same, or, that they deploy easily identifiable modes of operation. The manner in which 'race' divisions are actually invoked can be varied, complex and subtle.

⁸It was the tragic death of Ahmed Ullah, a 13 year old Asian pupil murdered in the school playground in 1987 by Darren Coulburn, a 13 year old white pupil, that led to the first official condemnation of multicultural and anti-racist initiatives which had been 'vigorously' pursued by the school attended by both victim and perpetrator. The public inquiry into the murder (see Ian Macdonald, Reena Bhavnani, Lily Khan and Gus John, *Murder in the Playground*, (London, Longsight Press, 1989)) concluded that the school's policies had not only failed to reduce the atmosphere for racial hatred, but had in fact created a further polarisation of racially differentiated groups. This was grossly encapsulated in the school's decision to forbid all white pupils from attending the funeral on the presumption that their presence would be offensive to the victim's family. If the black/white divide, or its variation paki/white, was at the core of Darren Coulburn's fatal stabbing of Ahmed Ullah then the penetration of this divide had to form a crucial part of anti-racist strategies. Many more recent events, including the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence, the '9/11' attacks on America, and the current 'War on Terror', have further reinforced the need to develop more complex conceptions of 'race' which can visualise and promote the permeability of racial boundaries.

seize the time and storm the citadels of cultural power'⁹. In response to this situation the thesis seeks a more comprehensive analysis of individual explorations of 'cultural hybridity'. The critical review, which is presented in chapter 2, resists presenting an overview or the interconnections between all contemporary explorations of hybridity as a framework of analysis. Instead the focus is on the contributions of Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Ali Rattansi whose respective works are examined individually to draw out their similarities and differences as well as bring to the fore aspects that have to date received little or no debate. The insights into 'cultural hybridity' provided by the four writers are used as a framework for contesting the empirical findings of the two case studies and vice versa.

Fourthly, contemporary theories of 'cultural hybridity' have largely evolved through an examination of abstract cultural expressions such as films, music and literature¹⁰. As such debates about the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' have remained limited to people's creative expressions, which are an inadequate context for understanding and challenging issues of 'race' and racism as they impact upon people's everyday lives¹¹. The thesis redresses this situation by choosing to examine the respective works through empirical investigation of two different aspects of the everyday cultural realities of South Asians in Britain - i.e. trends in usage of films on videotape and negotiations of *being* Muslim. By undertaking an empirical examination the thesis offers first hand insight into the relevance of applying theories of 'cultural hybridity' for understanding everyday experiences of 'race'. The concern with people's cultural realities is also a more appropriate context, than abstract cultural expressions, for assessing the strengths and limitations of notions of 'cultural hybridity' to provide a basis for establishing a cultural politics capable of overcoming persisting racisms.

⁹Phil Cohen, 'Through a Glass Darkly: Intellectuals on Race', in New Ethnicities, Old Racisms, edited by P. Cohen, (London, Zed Books, 1999), p7

¹⁰Jonathan Friedman, 'Global Crises, The Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp70-89

¹¹Phil Cohen, 'Through a Glass Darkly: Intellectuals on Race', in New Ethnicities, Old Racisms, edited by P. Cohen, (London, Zed Books, 1999), p8

Theories of 'cultural hybridity' are essentially concerned with understanding the dynamics of modern cultural formations and cultural identities. The central argument of the respective works is that people's cultural experiences and cultural outlooks are not denoted by fixed origins or singular histories but evolve over time through interaction with other histories and cultural narratives. Further, the manner of interacting with multiple histories marks out the direction of cultural change. Thus, implicit in the work of hybridity theorists is a connection between cultural identity and cultural change. For hybridity theorists it is identities that interact and meld distinct cultural influences that symbolise and promote progressive cultural change, what I refer to in the thesis as 'racially transgressive cultural change', because they disrupt mutually exclusive boundaries of 'race' that underlie all racisms. Throughout the thesis I draw upon the theme of 'racially transgressive cultural change' to, on the one hand, assess the value of theories of 'cultural hybridity' for enhancing our understandings of the dynamics of 'race', and on the other, identify whether the empirical findings indicate a disruption or reinforcement of established structures of 'race' and racial differences.

Chapter 1 relates the interconnecting themes central to theories of 'cultural hybridity', of 'cultural identity' and 'cultural change', to the subject matter concerning the two case studies. With reference to the audience survey this task is substantially aided by drawing on material from the field of audience studies. The notion of the 'active' audience as developed by 'new' audience researchers is singled out as providing an appropriate framework for structuring the first case study. Specifically, the notion of the 'active' audience emphasises the process of meaning construction as variable and specific to the individual and context in which the act of viewing takes place. This is shown to correspond with hybridity theorists' conception of identity formation as fluid and open to contestation and review. The first case study is thus positioned as an investigation into exactly the kind of dynamics hybridity theorists identify as being conducive to 'racially transgressive cultural change'. With respect to the second study, contextualising the themes 'cultural identity' and 'cultural change' is approached through an exposition of the commentaries on Muslim identities offered by Homi Bhabha and Edward Said. Five observations are drawn from Bhabha and Said's analyses, which present Muslim identities as static and foreclosed to cultural

change. Thus, in contrast to the audience survey, the second case study is seen to examine a process of identity formation deemed antagonistic to the notion of 'racially transgressive cultural change' and therefore also to the principles of 'cultural hybridity'.

It is important to note that the empirical research for both case studies was undertaken in the early stages of the thesis which has evolved over some ten years. This distance in time between research and reporting of the data means that the empirical findings relate to historically specific cultural trends and are thus presented with a notable degree of hindsight. At the same time, it is possible to offer two observations which underscore the currency of the research findings for the purposes of this thesis. Firstly, the subject matter of the studies, of 'audience activity' and 'Muslim subjectivities', remain two of the most popular focal points in media coverage and public debate alike for contesting the character and worth of modern identities. Secondly, within my own presentation of the empirical data I have attempted to show its relevance for understanding present day dynamics of 'race' by linking aspects of the two studies and the conclusions drawn to more recent events such as the exchange of ideas between the Indian and popular/mainstream film industries (see pp182-186) and the events of '9/11' (see p279).

Chapter 2 provides a detailed exposition of four individual contributions to contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. The chapter examines in turn the work of Hall, Brah, Gilroy and Rattansi and identifies how specific aspects of their respective insights relate to and/or are used as points of analysis for examining the empirical data from the two case studies. Whilst there are areas of overlap, that the two studies examine contrasting aspects of South Asian cultures means that they highlight and contest different features of the work of hybridity theorists. In the first study, the juxtaposition of such distinct cultural texts as popular/mainstream and Indian films offers a line of enquiry which frames notions of 'diaspora' and 'hybridity' within the context of 'negotiating multiple cultural influences'. As a result, points of analysis and debate between the empirical data and theories of hybridity are more weighted to such themes as 'cultural fragmentation', 'double consciousness' and 'bicultural trends'. In comparison, the focus of the second empirical study on trends

amongst significant numbers of young Muslims of foregrounding Islam in defining and structuring their everyday lives, situates the work of hybridity theorists within the context of a people's 'desire for certainty and absolute truth'. As such, the presentation of the findings from the second study is centred around such notions as a 'politics of location', 'authenticity' and the 'search for stability'.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 are devoted to presenting the two case studies. Chapters 3 and 5 deal with issues of methodology. They describe and evaluate the design of each study, clearly delineating their scope and limitations. These chapters also address the value of quantitative and qualitative techniques respectively for the purpose of cultural analysis.

The results of the audience survey are discussed in chapter 4. Analysis of the survey findings brings into sharper focus, and demands a more detailed assessment of, many of the central themes in contemporary hybridity theory. In particular, it raises questions as to the precise connection between 'cultural fragmentation' or 'cross-cultural location' and progressive cultural change. On the one hand, the popularity of both Indian and popular/mainstream films amongst significant numbers of South Asian respondents is seen to support hybridity theorists' emphasis on the need to examine modern cultures and identities for their transcultural character as opposed to their mutual exclusivity. On the other hand, the identification of a hierarchy of cultures through which respondents position the aesthetic qualities of popular/mainstream films as being superior to Indian films is seen to uphold, rather than overcome, established structures of 'race'. Thus, the survey data suggest that the intermixing of cultures does not necessarily result in the creation of 'new' cultural forms or outlooks which transgress racial boundaries. These observations are situated and discussed in a variety of related contexts ranging from generational differences in patterns of film consumption, accessing video merchandise, to the company in which Indian and popular/mainstream films are likely to be viewed. The discussion asserts that the process of hybridisation involves the interaction of distinct cultural forms that are already implicated in relations of power and competing identities.

More importantly perhaps, the findings from the audience survey highlight that in identifying 'racially transgressive cultural change' attention should be less on establishing the presence of multiple cultural influences, and more on evaluating whether the meaning or social position of particular cultural forms has been transformed to disrupt unequal relations of power and subordination. In this regard, my analysis of the trends in consumption of films on videotape amongst South Asian audiences specifically draws attention to how the ability to transgress racial boundaries through interaction with distinct cultural texts is significantly shaped by the dynamics of modern capitalism. On the one hand, modern capital encourages the increased visibility of previously marginalised cultural forms such that, for example, popular/Indian films become just as easy to access as mainstream/Hollywood films and this can be linked to Hall's conception of the 'new' logic of capital. At the same time modern capital also imposes a certain structure and framework of interaction which homogenises the cultures of production and consumption surrounding culturally distinct forms. The impact of these dynamics, as illustrated in chapter 4, is that the process of hybridisation itself is profoundly shaped by Western modes of economic and social interaction and it is the latter that, at least in the case of dynamics of film consumption amongst South Asian audiences, remain the overriding force behind cultural change. These findings provide a basis from which to begin to pinpoint particular dynamics of modernity, such as the 'new' logic of capital, through which contemporary negotiations of 'cultural hybridity' may circumvent established hierarchies of 'race' and culture.

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the study on young Muslim identities. The discussion suggests that the particular questions being asked and confronted by young Muslims in their (re)negotiation of the teachings of Islam are the specific outcome of engaging, not resisting, multiple cultural locations. For instance, individuals are shown to be actively re-reading key Islamic texts to highlight that the use of corporal punishment goes against the teachings of Islam. Thus, whilst respondents' narratives are seen to confirm a foregrounding of religion over all other co-ordinates of identity, the thesis argues - against Bhabha and Said's position - that this trend is by no means at odds with the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' or 'racially transgressive cultural change'. The process and its outcomes may not be so visibly apparent as, for example,

an individual's use of Indian and popular/mainstream films, but its impact in transgressing racial and cultural boundaries may be just as significant. In drawing out the transgressive qualities of the respondents' negotiations of Islam the chapter makes connections with some of the more subtle and less talked about aspects of contemporary notions of hybridity. For example, Brah's exposition of the 'politics of location' as integral to the 'diaspora' condition is used to describe respondents' foregrounding of Islam as a process of re-reading, and not recreating, the past in order to deal with the very modern conditions of 'uncertainty' and 'chaos'.

Chapter 6 positions the racially transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' within a context of identity negotiation, i.e. the foregrounding of Islam, more commonly perceived as resisting cultural change and the interpenetration of multiple cultural locations. Additionally, the discussion illustrates how the progressive qualities of the 'new' Muslim identities are undermined by dominant discourses through the imposition of a linear conception of time and space. For example, mainstream Western discourses position the veil as an outdated mode of female control for all times and all places even though in reality the veil acquires such contrasting meaning and significance that it is a form of female oppression for some Muslim women and empowerment for others. In effect, whilst personal negotiations of *being* Muslim contest established notions and practices of Islam these same identities are persistently represented as static and pre-modern within dominant modes of representation. Here then the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' is suppressed by another feature of modernity of a linear conception of time and space.

A critical appraisal of the empirical approach of the thesis is undertaken in chapter 7. This chapter draws on the methodological arguments within 'new' audience studies to identify the abstract nature of current hybridity theory as limiting its applicability as regards understanding people's everyday cultural realities. This point is underscored by linking the limitations of Bhabha and Said's commentaries on Muslim identities to their lack of first hand interaction with the voices and opinions of Muslim individuals. More critical engagement between hybridity theory and empirical research is deemed crucial for advancing the former as an ideological basis for developing more effective strategies against 'race' hatred and inequalities. The chapter also re-evaluates the

preference among 'new' audience scholars for qualitative ethnographic modes of investigation and emphasises that quantitative data are critical for identifying how precisely qualitative findings inform our understanding of cultural relations and overall trends in wider society. As such rather than preferring one technique over another it is more productive to assess how quantitative and qualitative methods may complement and accommodate each other's strengths and limitations.

The conclusion draws on the main findings of the empirical research to argue that the 'progressive' power of hybridity does not boil down to the ability to 'belong' or feel at ease in culturally distinct contexts, but lies in the ability to function outside of and in opposition to processes of racialisation. Crucially, much of the theoretical work examined constitutes a distinctly second generation black British perspective on 'cultural hybridity'. In that sense there are a number of shortcomings in the existing works if in effect they are to act as a basis for developing more effective strategies against persisting feelings of racial hatred and deepening racial inequalities.

Drawing on the contrasting findings from the two case studies about the racially transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' the conclusion proposes a distinction between two models of cross-cultural interaction. The first model describes an interlocking of multiple cultural locations which actually result in more exclusive cultural identities, such as the expectation that Muslims don't simply marry other Muslims but Muslims of the same nationality. The second model represents experiences and negotiations of multiple cultural influences where axes of identification move independently of one another yet impact on each other's meanings depending on how and in what contexts they collide.

Addressing the role of dominant discourses in determining the impact of racially transgressive expressions of 'cultural hybridity' the conclusion further asserts the need to reconsider the central significance accorded to the 'migrant condition' as a prototype of the postmodern predicament. A new notion - the 'giraffe's perspective' - is developed to balance the weight of emphasis between the 'migrant condition' and the role/influence of indigenous Western identities for establishing a cultural politics that effectively disrupts racial and cultural hierarchies.

Chapter 1

Framing ‘Cultural Hybridity’ for Empirical Investigation

As described in the Introduction, the central aim of the work of hybridity theorists is to contest modern identities for their capacity to transcend mutually exclusive structures of human relations and to stimulate cultural change. The nature of the interrelationship between ‘cultural identity’ and ‘cultural change’ can thus be identified as underpinning the concerns of hybridity theorists. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the central themes of cultural identity and cultural change as defining points of investigation and analysis for the two pieces of empirical research on which the thesis constructs its critical evaluation of ‘cultural hybridity’.

Reflecting the contrasting nature and subject matter of the two case studies involved, the chapter is divided into two sections. Each section relates and problematises the themes of cultural identity and cultural change in the contexts of ‘audience activity’ and ‘Muslim subjectivities’ respectively.

With respect to the first case study (see chapters 3 and 4), which compares the use of Indian and popular/mainstream films on videotape amongst South Asian audiences, demarcating cultural identity and cultural change for empirical analysis is approached by examining empirical trends and debates from the field of audience research. The first section begins by outlining a conception of the subject that is sensitive to the dynamics of ‘audience activity’ and ‘cultural hybridity’. Through a consideration of key shifts in the way in which broadcasters and academic audience researchers have perceived and responded to the racial heterogeneity of the British population the section identifies the notion of the ‘active’ audience as an appropriate mode of investigation for structuring the first case study. Its appropriateness is related to the emphasis on understanding audiences and their relationship with media texts as an act of cultural contestation in which meanings are negotiated and dependant on the particular context of viewing as well as the individual’s interaction with various axes of identification such as ‘race’, gender, class etc. This is shown to be consistent with hybridity theorists’ positioning of ‘race’ and ethnicity variables as ‘open’ signifiers which acquire meaning in different contexts and through interaction with other co-

ordinates of identity. The discussion moves on to address the intricacies of measuring and interpreting the relationship between cultural identity and cultural change as a complex and fluid process by examining three empirical audience studies, i.e. Jacqueline Bobo's research into black women's readings of *The Colour Purple*, the Women Viewing Violence study, and Marie Gillespie's examination of the cultures of media consumption amongst South Asian families in Southall. By assessing each study's attempts to relate the significance of 'race' and ethnicity variables to audience activity the section underlines four key observations which inform the analytical framework for my own empirical research. The key observations demand that empirical analyses of audience activity, (i) take account of the individual's past experiences of media consumption; (ii) avoid use of categories of 'race' and ethnic identification (e.g. Asian, African Caribbean, white) as though they were homogenous and mutually exclusive; (iii) do not overestimate the 'cultural resistance' of meanings negotiated by viewers which challenge dominant readings of particular texts; and (iv) recognise that the act of media consumption itself plays a role in defining, as much as it is defined by, an individual's negotiation of his/her own identity.

The second section contextualises cultural identity and cultural change in relation to debating Muslim identities which are the focus of investigation in the second case study (see chapters 5 and 6). This is achieved by examining Homi Bhabha and Edward Said's respective commentaries on the 'polemical' reactions of 'ordinary' Muslims to such events as 'the Rushdie affair' and the more recent 'War on Terror'. Bhabha and Said's observations are not presented as being representative of the position of all hybridity theorists with respect to Muslim identities. However, both writers have made significant contributions to the body of academic work promoting 'cultural hybridity' as a forceful challenge to essentialist conceptions of 'race' and culture. Their contributions, like that of the four theorists discussed in chapter 2, are often cited and now well established reference points for debating the culturally fragmented character of modern identities and subjectivities¹². Thus, recognised as

¹²The recent death of Edward Said introduces a more permanent sense of reading his work retrospectively compared to Bhabha, Hall, Brah, Gilroy and Rattansi who remain active in an ongoing personal dialogue with their writings.

they are as proponents of hybridity¹³, Said and Bhabha's comments provide a relevant focus for pinpointing a series of questions about the in/compatibility of Muslim subjectivities and the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. The section highlights five underlying assumptions through which Said and Bhabha posit the respective cultural outlooks of Muslims and hybridity theorists as proceeding from two contrasting conceptions of history and human experience. Each of these assumptions are utilised in chapter 6 to contest the cultural outlooks relayed by the Muslim respondents participating in the second case study and can be summarised as follows, (i) a devotion to Islam is the source of public unity amongst Muslims; (ii) as a scripted mode of thought Islam, and by implication Muslims, are foreclosed to cultural change making their outlooks 'static' and 'primitive'; (iii) with no capacity for cultural change Muslims are unable to generate new modes of governance and are bound to 'barbaric' forms of discipline and outdated societal structures; (iv) being foreclosed to cultural change makes Muslims ethnically bounded; and (v) Islam promotes patriarchal relations and serves to subordinate women.

My starting point for locating a suitable conception of the subject for the purposes of the first case study is to consider overall changes in the way in which the broadcasting industry has responded to the 'diversity' of the British audience.

'Race', Ethnicity and Audience Activity

The literature in the field¹⁴ would suggest that from the late 1960s onwards there have been three significant shifts in the way broadcasters have sought to cater for the 'race' and ethnic diversity of their viewers. My intention is not to undertake a comprehensive discussion of these here, but to highlight overall changes in attitude towards 'race' and ethnic differences. It should be noted that terrestrial television is the main focus of the literature being drawn upon.

¹³see various essays in Prina Werbner & Tariq Modood, eds, Debating Cultural Hybridity, (London, Zed Books, 1997)

¹⁴Commission for Racial Equality, Television in a Multi-Racial Society, (London, CRE, 1982)
Therese Daniels & Jane Gerson, eds, The Colour Black, (London, BFI, 1989)
Jim Pines, ed., Black and White in Colour, (London, BFI, 1992)
John Twitchin, ed., The Black and White Media Show, (London, Trentham Books, 1988)

Popular television between the late sixties and seventies did not attempt to respond to the specific tastes of a racially diverse audience but was driven by the political mood, which at that time was characterised by an 'anxiety about the black presence' most notably conveyed in Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech. Jim Pines describes this period as a time when television was operating 'in tandem with the state in 'managing' what was then perceived as the growing race relations crisis'¹⁵. The state saw blacks and immigrants as a problem and this is how they were portrayed on television. A large number of multicultural documentary programmes were produced to explain 'aspects of so-called immigrant life' such as arranged marriages. Situation comedies were really the only other television genre to develop racial narratives, or as some have preferred to describe them, 'racist' narratives¹⁶. Programmes like *Till Death Us Do Part*, *Love Thy Neighbour* and *Mind Your Language* were extremely popular among the British population and the programme makers were accused of using racism to increase audience numbers. In spite of their racist disposition, it would be wrong to assume that black people never watched these programmes. Ashwani Sharma has described how in the absence of anything appropriate or appealing to him and his family they often ended up watching programmes that were insulting to them¹⁷.

Kobena Mercer observes how the arrival of Channel Four in 1982, with its mandate 'to provide for the unmet needs of various "minority" audiences', signalled a new era in which 'television as an institution [began] to rethink its attitude to the cultural diversity of its nationwide audience'¹⁸. The corresponding policies to satisfy this diversity produced an increase in the number of black faces on television and in a wider variety of programmes. Current affairs programmes such as *The Bandung File*, *Eastern Eye* and *Black on Black*, as well as sit-coms such as *No Problem*, *Desmonds* and *The Fosters*, all resulted from a recognition of the diverse tastes of a multi-racial

¹⁵Black and White in Colour, (London, BFI, 1992), p12

¹⁶see Andy Medhurst's contribution 'Laughing Matters' in The Colour Black, edited by T. Daniels & J. Gerson, (London, BFI, 1989), pp15-60

¹⁷'Do they Think We're Uloo?', in The Neglected Audience, edited by J. Willis & T. Wollen, (London, BFI, 1990), pp61-65

¹⁸Welcome to the Jungle, (London, Routledge, 1994), pp77-78

British audience. It has to be pointed out that these programmes were not without their critics, many of them highlighting the tendency of the narratives to homogenise black culture and reinforce ‘common sense’ racist stereotypes¹⁹. In addition, the programmes continued to be produced without any substantial dialogue with, or research into, how black, or for that matter white, audiences felt about them. This has only begun to change in the last ten years or so.

Empirical audience studies such as ‘Black Minority Viewers and Television’ and ‘Ethnic Minorities and Television’, commissioned by the BBC and Channel 4 respectively, signal the most recent trend in attitude towards audiences. Both studies were commissioned to consult black audiences and ascertain their opinions about television programmes and I refer to their findings in chapter 4 (see pp144-146). Here it is important to note that the studies represent a conception of the audience as ‘active’ consumers whose opinions are deemed important for identifying appropriate television schedules as well as measuring the success or failure of individual programmes to satisfy diverse tastes.

Put crudely, whereas audiences were once regarded as a gullible ‘mass’, increasingly they are being treated as a fragmented and heterogeneous body of individuals with diverse tastes as well as sophisticated and complex means of ‘receiving’ media texts. Before addressing the implications of this shift for contextualising and measuring ‘race’ and ethnicity variables in empirical research, I want to delineate further the notion of the ‘active’ audience which has been more centrally contested and established within academic audience studies.

David Morley’s study of The ‘Nationwide’ Audience²⁰ is commonly recognised as marking the beginning of a ‘new’ era in academic audience research. Previously, academic perspectives on audience activity were dominated by paradigms emphasising either ‘the power of the text’, such as the ‘effects’ model and *Screen* theory, or ‘the power of the viewer’ such as the ‘uses and gratifications’ approach.

¹⁹see for example Paul Gilroy, ‘C4 -Bridgehead or Bantustan?’, *Screen*, 24 (1983) no. 4-5, July-October

²⁰London, BFI, 1980

Ang, Morley and Moores have undertaken detailed comparative critiques of these various perspectives²¹. In summary, they criticise approaches emphasising 'the power of the text' for 'inflecting the old 'mass society' thesis where the audience is subject to the ideological manipulation of media institutions'. By comparison, those approaches emphasising 'the power of the viewer' are seen 'to overlay the 'freedom' of the audience'²².

The 'new' era in audience research represents a significant departure from previous perspectives on audience activity in that it contextualises the process of media consumption as a site of 'cultural *struggle*'²³. From this position textual analysis alone is regarded as an inadequate indicator of the meanings conveyed by individual programmes and images. Further, the idea that audience responses to particular texts can be accurately predicted or categorised by homogenous categories of age, gender, class, 'race' and so on, is also deemed implausible. Instead meaning construction is conceived and investigated as a variable process which is contested and negotiated by the individual viewer.

This delineation of audience activity as a field of cultural contestation and negotiation has led to the emergence of a body of academic work often referred to as 'new' audience research²⁴. Two distinguishing features bind this work together. Firstly, it examines the process of meaning construction as a two way process, as the outcome of the specific interaction between text and audience²⁵. Secondly, it proceeds from the

²¹Ien Ang, Desperately Seeking the Audience, (London, Routledge, 1991)
David Morley, Television Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992)
Shaun Moores, Interpreting Audiences, (London, Sage, 1993)

²²Shaun Moores, Interpreting Audiences, (London, Sage, 1993), pp5-7

²³Ien Ang, Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996)

²⁴I use the term 'new' audience research in the absence of an appropriate alternative. However, it should be noted that many audience scholars remain uncomfortable with its use perceiving it to be misleading in its suggestions that there is a wholesale break with previous approaches to audience research, or that the audience is a self-contained empirical entity (see for example Introduction in Ien Ang, Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996), pp1-15).

²⁵The idea that products aren't simply made for people to consume but that processes of production and consumption inform each other's dynamics and outcomes is a central argument emerging from Paul du Gay et al's book Doing Cultural Studies (London, Sage, 1997) which examines the changing production features of the Sony Walkman.

position that to gain an insight into the process of meaning construction it is necessary to investigate audience activity in its 'natural' setting. This emphasis on audiences as 'active' negotiators has generated a whole set of academic debates and texts²⁶ which underline the inadequacies of abstract theorising in understanding everyday cultural realities preferring, instead, ethnographic research to gain an insight into the structure and significance of people's daily routines.

The empirical position advanced by 'new' audience researchers raises important methodological implications for this thesis and its concern with advancing abstract theories of 'hybridity' for understanding everyday dynamics of 'race'. These implications are explored in some detail in chapter 7 where I argue that empirical investigation and methodological scrutiny must be accorded critical significance in order for theories of 'cultural hybridity' to provide a meaningful framework through which to comprehend and challenge ongoing racial inequalities. The overall impact of this argument on the structure of this thesis is reflected in my own preference for empirical investigation as the central means for contesting the relevance of the work of hybridity theorists for understanding contemporary racial and cultural relations.

Whilst the shift towards engaging the views of audiences is a welcome one, the question must be asked why both academia and the media industry in general have gradually moved from the position of virtually no dialogue with audiences to detailed analyses of their tastes and preferences. With respect to this it is useful to note Ian Ang's conception of the 'active' audience as 'both an expression and a consequence' of the emergence of a media industry driven by the principles of free market capitalism²⁷. The audience is now treated as 'active' instead of 'passive' because the ability to exercise choice has prompted media producers to become concerned with identifying and targeting specific tastes, as opposed to churning out programmes for an 'anonymous mass'.

²⁶see for example, James Lull, *Inside Family Viewing*, (London, Routledge, 1990)
Ellen Seiter et al, eds, *Remote Control*, (London, Routledge 1991)
David Buckingham, ed., *Reading Audiences*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993)
Roger Dickinson et al, eds, *Approaches to Audiences*, (London, Arnold, 1998)

²⁷*Living Room Wars*, (London, Routledge, 1996), p.9

These shifts in the media industry's attitude towards audience 'diversity' are an example of how actively engaging the cultural identities of 'ordinary' people has become a significant feature of advanced capitalist economies. They also crucially highlight the shifting relations of power, or at least, how economic power has become interlocked with the lifestyles and opinions of 'ordinary' people. This would support Hall's identification of the 'new' logic of capital as producing a 'crisis of identities' or the 'global postmodern'²⁸. Hall asserts that a direct consequence of the 'new' logic of capital is that 'migrant' populations, their identities and ways of life, once ridiculed by colonial administrations for economic domination, are now treated as highly valued attributes in the pursuit of economic growth. This aspect of Hall's work features centrally in his exposition of 'cultural hybridity' and is delineated in more detail in Chapter 2 (see pp66-69).

With respect to the overall objectives of this thesis a crucial question arising from the above discussion would be, 'how is this newly found cultural power of 'migrant' identities articulated, and in what ways does it resist, challenge and effectively disrupt long established inequalities?' This is the central research question directing the purpose and structure of the first case study and is investigated vis a vis the notion of the 'active' audience. A detailed explication of the aims and objectives of the study, choice of methodology, its scope and limitations is provided in chapter 3. Here I identify how the study proposes to problematise and measure the main themes of cultural identity and cultural change.

In my first case study I utilise the survey method to identify and examine patterns of consumption of popular/mainstream and Indian films on videotape amongst South Asian audiences. The study draws upon the notion of the 'active' audience to locate cultural identity within the particular tastes and preferences of the respondents. In doing so cultural identity is problematised as an act of negotiation and becomes a floating signifier in that it is not denoted by fixed ethnic markers such as nationality or place of birth, but located in the particular ways in which the respondents incorporate popular/mainstream and Indian films in their everyday lives. In this regard

²⁸'The Local and the Global', in Culture, Globalisation and the World System, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp19-39

it is appropriate to point out that both 'new' audience research and hybridity theorists proceed from a similar understanding of identity formation.

For example, during the course of his 'Nationwide' study Morley became alert to not only internal differences within each group, but also the possibility of 'a person making different readings of the same material in different contexts, and making different readings of material on different topics - oppositional in some areas, dominant in others'²⁹. Morley was able to use the findings from his study to critique approaches which endorsed the idea that audience activity could be coded or interpreted through neat socio-economic categories such as male/female, married/single, and employed/unemployed. The 'Nationwide' study was the precursor for 'new' audience research and its particular conception of identities as being subjective, open to contestation and revision as opposed to fixed, inherited and stable. Philip Schlesinger presents this perspective succinctly when he argues that 'rather than starting with a set of pre-given objects or national cultures and investigating the effects that communication technologies have on them, we should begin by posing the question of identity itself and ask what importance communications of various sorts might have in its constitution'³⁰.

Similarly, Hall's conception of the 'end of the essential black subject' and subsequent explorations of notions such as 'diaspora' and 'hybridity', both by Hall and other theorists, have emerged out of a recognition and engagement with the heterogeneous and fragmented nature of modern cultures and modern identities. This body of work, like the 'new' audience research, approaches its subject matter from the position of internal differentiations and intersections of various axes of identification including class, 'race', sexuality, gender, age and so on.

On the basis of this connection the first case study, with its central positioning of the notion of the 'active' audience, can be seen to examine cultural identity in precisely the context hybridity theorists envisage as being conducive to the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. This link is further underscored in the study through its

²⁹Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992), p135

³⁰'On National Identity', in Social Science Information, 26(2), (1987), pp219-264

juxtaposition of popular/mainstream and Indian films. Concerned with contrasting the use of these two categories of film the study affords a line of enquiry that locates cultural identity in the context of 'negotiating multiple cultural influences'. With reference to this it is appropriate to highlight that it is from within the encounter and intermixing of distinct cultural forms that hybridity theorists have located the emergence of new cultural identities which transgress fixed racial and cultural boundaries and in doing so disrupt the dominant social order. By examining the use of two categories of film which deploy distinct cinematic, linguistic and cultural codes the first case study provides an opportunity to scrutinise the link made by hybridity theorists between 'cross-cultural location' and the emergence of 'racially transgressive identities'.

On the matter of relating the survey and its findings to the process of cultural change, I do not confine my approach to measuring the respondents' propensity to interact with both popular/mainstream and Indian films. In that sense, my analytical framework does not automatically link the tendency to interact with both popular/mainstream and Indian films as evidence of 'racially transgressive cultural change'. Rather, the implications of the survey findings for the process of cultural change are assessed in the context of identifying how the respondents' interaction with the respective texts disrupts or confirms dominant Western stereotypes which position Indian films as being inferior to popular/mainstream films. The study achieves this more complex contextualisation of cultural change in two specific ways.

Firstly, the study undertakes to identify and contrast the patterns of interaction with the two categories of films in a variety of related contexts from accessing video merchandise to the company in which the films are likely to be viewed. As such my empirical approach remains sensitive to the dynamics of consumption specific to each category of film, taking account of their differing social and economic circumstances such as the much wider availability of popular/mainstream films compared to Indian films. Secondly, my interpretation of the survey findings is careful to relate any differences in patterns of consumption between the respondents to relevant social and historical contexts. This is most notably the case with respect to generational

differences where the study relates, for example, the contrasting 'high' versus 'low' levels of use of popular/mainstream films between younger and older respondents respectively to changing social circumstances, such as relations with the indigenous population and competence in the English language (see pp159-168).

The effectiveness with which my empirical approach maintains a complex conception of not just cultural change but also cultural identity is ultimately dependent on the ability to mobilise and be responsive to the various axes of identification as open signifiers. Precisely how this is achieved cannot be relayed through fixed categories or terminology but is identified through a critique of previous audience studies and their particular attempts to measure 'race' and ethnicity variables in an empirical context. This is the focus of discussion for the remainder of this section.

The discussion does not undertake to review every audience study that has sought to address issues of 'race' and ethnicity. A focussed discussion around three studies is preferred in order to highlight and devote attention to specific issues, obstacles and difficulties of investigating 'race' and ethnicity variables in an empirical context. The studies have been selected for the varying degrees of complexity with which they approach and problematise 'race' and ethnicity variables in their respective investigations. They are, Jacqueline Bobo's research into African-American women's readings of the film version of Alice Walker's novel *The Colour Purple*³¹; the Women Viewing Violence study, which engages racially mixed samples in its analysis of female responses to media representations of violence³²; and Marie Gillespie's inquiry into the audio-visual culture of South Asian families in Southall³³. As noted in the chapter's introduction, my examination of the three studies highlights four considerations for developing an analytical framework responsive to the complex and variable process of identity formation and its relationship to audience activity.

³¹'The Colour Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers', in Female Spectators, edited by E. Deirdre Pribram, (London, Verso, 1988), pp90-109, and Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995)

³²Philip Schlesinger et al, Women Viewing Violence, (London, BFI, 1992)

³³Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995)

My critique begins with a combined review of Bobo's and the Women Viewing Violence studies to contrast and assess their respective insights into how negotiations of 'race' and gender interweave and impact upon women's responses to particular images and texts. The focus of Marie Gillespie's study shares a close affinity with my own investigation into the use of films on videotape amongst South Asian audiences. This connection warrants a separate and more detailed critique of Gillespie's work.

Both Bobo's and the Women Viewing Violence studies can be seen to contextualise cultural identity as an open signifier in that axes of identification, such as 'race' and 'sex' are not treated as operating independently of one another but are analysed for the ways in which they interact and influence each others meaning. Before undertaking a comparative critique to draw out their respective strengths and limitations, a description of each of the two studies is appropriate.

Black Women as Cultural Readers

Bobo's research, which combines textual analysis with group discussions, is suggestive of how meanings become 'differentially' entangled with historical representations of, and attitudes towards, the individual viewer's social group or community. Her initial study examined black women's responses to the film *The Colour Purple* and sought to understand the 'overwhelming positive response' from black female viewers towards a text deemed racist by many critics. In a subsequent publication Bobo extends her inquiry to examine responses to the novel on which the film is based, as well as two other texts by black women, i.e. Terry McMillan's novel Waiting to Exhale and Julie Dash's film *Daughter's of the Dust*. Here I limit my discussion to Bobo's analysis of black women's responses to Spielberg's film version of *The Colour Purple*.

The empirical data around which Bobo constructs her analysis is drawn from two discussion groups made up of women of African American background. The first, consisting of nine participants, was conducted in December 1987 in Northern California and the second, consisting of six participants, was held in October 1988 in the Pacific Northwest. In spite of the film's stereotypical representations of black men as hypersexual and brutal, Bobo found that the women in her sample did not only

enjoy the film but were empowered by the meanings they themselves had constructed. Bobo's findings are insightful in exposing how discourses of 'race' and gender collide to create vastly different responses to the same text. Referring to the hostile picketing against the film by organisations such as NAACP³⁴ and the adverse criticisms of many black male reviewers, Bobo points out how black women's 'positive' responses were largely at odds with those of many black men. She locates the women's defiance of the call for 'a wholesale rejection of the film' in 'black women's resistant history'.

Bobo's own textual analysis³⁵ describes Spielberg's visual adaptation as a 'reversion to past racist works'. In relation to this the identification of a 'reconstructed meaning' amongst the women in her sample is central to her argument that the women's extraction of a 'progressive' and 'empowering' message cannot be interpreted as an acceptance of the stereotypical caricatures presented by Spielberg. For Bobo, the women's positive reaction needs to be understood within the broader context of their position as cultural consumers of mainstream texts in which they have been consistently marginalised and depicted in 'demeaning ways'. In Bobo's words, 'we have as evidence our years of watching films and television programmes and reading plays and books. Out of habit, as readers of mainstream texts, we have learned to ferret out the beneficial and put up blinders against the rest'³⁶.

The Color Purple breaks the pattern of previous racial imagery in Hollywood films for the simple fact that it has an 'all black repertoire'. For many black men that it reinforces and magnifies stereotypical conceptions of black masculinity makes the experience of watching this film little different from watching other mainstream texts. But for black female viewers the struggles of Celie, Shug, Sofia and Nettie resonate with black women's struggles against patriarchal structures and racial oppression. Bobo highlights these novel elements of 'an all black repertoire' and 'a focus on black women's struggles' as key features which make watching *The Color Purple*, for black women at least, a different experience from watching other mainstream texts. More

³⁴National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

³⁵Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), pp61-90

³⁶'The Colour Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers', in Female Spectators, edited by E. Deirdre Pribram, (London, Verso, 1988), p96

specifically, Bobo's empirical analysis suggests that the novel elements are exploited by black female viewers to create a 'reconstructed meaning' in which the comic and caricatured segments become edited out mentally. In place, the women's own historical and cultural knowledge is brought to bear on the process of meaning construction constituting, in effect, a 'discursive strategy' through which their own struggles 'to transform their lives in the face of oppressive circumstances'³⁷ become transposed onto Spielberg's text.

Women Viewing Violence

Whereas Bobo's study sets out to examine the significance of 'race' and 'sex' in a specific audiences' reconstruction of a narrative so that it resonates with their own experiences, Women Viewing Violence contextualises issues of 'race' and 'sex' from a completely different perspective. The latter undertakes a comparative analysis of how women of different ethnic groups view dominant media representations of violence. A sample of ninety-one women was recruited from England and Scotland, with approximately equal numbers of respondents who had 'experience of violence' and 'no experience of violence'. Three ethnic groups were represented and distinguished as white, Asian and Afro-Caribbean. The women were divided into fourteen viewing groups of no more than nine respondents and so that regional, class and ethnic membership, as well as 'experience'/'no experience' of violence remained consistent within each group. Using the same set format for each group, the respondents were shown different types of violence against women (including rape and physical assault) presented in various genres. These included a factual programme (*Crimewatch*); a soap opera (*EastEnders*); a television play (*Closing Ranks*); and a feature film (*The Accused*). After each screening the women were asked to complete a questionnaire followed by a group discussion sharing their opinions and feelings about what they had seen.

As with Bobo's research, the Women Viewing Violence study affirms the significance of 'socio-cultural' factors and 'lived experience' in audience interpretations of a given text. The study identified a 'patterned diversity' amongst the respondents where, in addition to 'experience of violence', 'ethnicity' was found to be

³⁷Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), p31

a strong differentiating factor in women's responses to televised violence. There were two particularly distinctive ways in which ethnic identity was seen to differentiate the women's reactions. Firstly, Afro-Caribbean respondents were particularly critical of the depiction of black people in programmes like *Crimewatch* and *Eastenders* pointing out that the images and characters tended to be 'uninformed, biased or bigoted'. This had the effect of 'alienating' the women in that it limited their ability to identify with the individuals on screen. The study also found that although the Afro-Caribbean women could relate to the depictions of rape and domestic violence against white women, their reactions were tempered 'with reservations about equality of treatment between black and white that are based in the experience of racism'³⁸. They were often drawn to consider how differently events may have unfolded if the white victim had been black. As one woman commented in relation to *The Accused*:

I found myself saying that in the film [...] if I change that woman into a black woman, it would be even more painful for me. Because I know that the whole line of the story would've changed [...] and I know that the verdict could have been different. And I know that the support [...] the sympathy would've been very different.³⁹

A second way in which ethnicity was found to be a strong differentiating factor between the different groups of women was with respect to the way in which Asian women's responses relayed a distinct sense of distance between their 'lived experience' and 'dominant white culture'. This manifested itself in, for example, their responses to *The Accused*, in that they were less likely than the other two groups to find the film to be 'believable' or 'violent'. In support of its assertion that Asian women were 'operating within a cultural perspective relatively detached from the mainstream'⁴⁰, the study referenced quotes from Asian women emphasising differences in cultural codes, such as 'dress' and 'drinking', which were seen to be

³⁸Philip Schlesinger et al, Women Viewing Violence, (London, BFI, 1992), p143

³⁹ibid., p141

⁴⁰ibid., p141

indicative of their expectations about ‘appropriate’ male and female behaviour. The following two comments illustrate the point:

If she’s drinking too much, you know, that’s why that happened. [...] Drinking is bad and [we] learn [this] from that film.⁴¹

and

See, it’s an Islamic point [...] that women [are] not allowed to wear this kind of dress, so other women looked at her and fancy her. That’s why they say you cover yourself with your clothes so that other men don’t look at you, or fancy where he wants you. It’s against our religion.⁴²

Like the respondents in Bobo’s study, the participants in the Women Viewing Violence research can be seen to transpose their own historical and cultural frames of reference onto the text in the process of meaning construction. However, a closer comparison of the two studies suggests that the relationship between ethnicity and the process of meaning construction is more narrowly framed in the Women Viewing Violence study than in Bobo’s research. Two observations in particular can be singled out to illustrate this point.

Accounting for past experiences of watching mainstream texts

The first observation is that Women Viewing Violence is less sensitive, than Bobo’s study, to the significance of diverse experiences and established perceptions of mainstream texts as playing a role in the different reactions of its sample. For example, Bobo is careful to note that black women’s positive responses to *The Color Purple* are dependent on finding elements within the film that deviate from previous Hollywood representations of black women. Ethnic identity thus becomes interwoven with the very act of viewing and the women’s responses are measured in accordance with what they, from their position as black women, have come to expect from a mainstream text, and not in accordance with what critics and many black men thought of the film. By comparison, Women Viewing Violence makes a more simplistic

⁴¹ibid., p141

⁴²ibid., p146

correlation between ethnic identity and audience readings. This is clearly illustrated in its assumption with reference to *The Accused* that, ‘the fact that the film was American posed no difficulties for the women viewers and, in common with the other screenings, there were some strong and persistent reactions’⁴³. That the respondents understood and responded to the narrative does not make the relationship between viewer and text unproblematic or uncomplex. The lack of sensitivity to this point leads to some rather reductive and inaccurate interpretations of the findings. This can be seen in the study’s assertion that, ‘in the case of Asian women, The Accused offered information about practices and values at a considerable distance from their lived experience, [...] their reading of the film validated their differences, showing them how their culture could operate to protect them from danger’⁴⁴.

This conclusion can be challenged by simply referencing voluntary sector groups such as Southall Black Sisters and Newham Asian Women’s Project whose work stands as evidence against the notion that Asian culture can operate to protect Asian women from the danger of domestic/male violence. My point is not so much that the women’s comments about ‘dress’ and ‘drinking’ are somehow invalid. Nor that if the study was to be conducted again that similar comments would not be forthcoming. My criticism is more simply that to take the women’s responses out of the specific context in which they were made and present them as though they were an accurate or literal reflection of reality is problematic. As Bobo’s study underlines, any analysis of audience readings needs to take account of established codes of reference associated with the specific context of viewing. In relation to this an important point to note with respect to Asian respondents’ comments about *The Accused* is that situations of rape and domestic violence against Asian women are rarely portrayed in Hollywood texts, or for that matter on mainstream British television. As such some feelings of detachment from the ‘popular’ images of violence around which the Women Viewing Violence study was constructed will have been inevitable amongst the Asian respondents. And such feelings would have been further compounded by the fact that none of the programmes chosen for screening had Asian characters.

⁴³ibid., p135

⁴⁴ibid., p164

On the basis of these observations it might be argued that the ‘cultural distance’ conveyed in the comments of Asian women is perhaps suggestive of how, when faced with images that provide little personal identification audiences may draw on dominant ‘common sense’ discourses of cultural difference to make sense of the texts. This does not mean that an Asian woman in a sari or salwar kameez is unlikely to flirt or be any less vulnerable to male violence than women of other ethnic backgrounds. In presenting the findings as indicative of how ‘Asian culture can operate to protect Asian women from danger’ the authors appear to have confused ‘Asian women’s reactions to male violence’ with ‘Asian women’s reactions to media depictions of male violence in a predominantly ‘white’ context’. Having said that, it does also appear that the study seems to have over-emphasised the ‘cultural distance’ conveyed by the Asian respondents. This brings me to the second weakness in the way Women Viewing Violence contextualises ethnic identity which relates to its slippage into a framework of binary opposites to make sense of ethnically diverse reactions of its respondents.

Avoiding mutually exclusive arrangements of ethnic differences

The following edited extract involving a group of Scottish Asian women helps illustrate how Women Viewing Violence lapses into presenting ethnic differences in mutually exclusive terms:

Speaker 1: Aye, she was leading them on, I think, just then. She had too much to drink, and the way she was dancing, and her clothes as well [...]

Speaker 2: Her clothes have got nothing to do with it [...] if I could give a quick summary of the film for me, it shows you how men portray women. It shows you how women think about women who wear short clothes and things like that, and think its provocation [...] But she was still in the right. She was still raped and she was still a victim of criminal solicitation. You know what I mean? It doesn’t matter what you wear [...]

Speaker 1: I say the same thing as her [...] I mean, I think as well that she didn't provoke, but that's not what everybody will think [...]

Speaker 3: [...] That one particular scene of rape. To me it was, you know, for the guys - it was like an easy game [...] When I was watching that, I wasn't watching it saying, 'She was wearing a mini-skirt, she was dancing and all that.'⁴⁵

The study interprets this exchange as an indication of the 'cultural sensitivity amongst Asians towards questions of immodesty in dress'. Yet it goes on to contradict this assertion half a page later by pointing out that 'the views [...] were by no means discrepant with the majority line taken in [other] groups'⁴⁶. Perhaps more significantly, the study fails to acknowledge how the above exchange actually challenges attitudes that view certain forms of dress as signalling sexual availability. Speaker 1 clearly begins by identifying the character's behaviour and dress as provoking sexual advances by men but changes her position in response to Speaker 2's forthright denunciation of any blame being placed on the victim's appearance. Overall the conversation is clearly in opposition to perceptions that 'short clothes' provoke sexual abuse and therefore contests rather than supports expectations that women should behave modestly.

This is but one of several examples illustrating the study's more general conception of ethnicity as a marker of fixed group boundaries. A narrow conception of ethnicity and its positioning within a framework of binary opposites manifests itself in an eagerness to identify holistic group differences. This is further highlighted by the study's tendency to view the similarities across the ethnic groupings as being irrelevant to ethnic identity. For example, the study found a 'universal' fear of rape amongst the respondents which it perceived as 'being associated with gender and the general commonalities of women's experiences rather than with class or ethnicity'⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ibid., p146

⁴⁶ibid., p147

⁴⁷ibid., p166

The study is not wrong to highlight gender as a central factor in the women's shared fear of rape. However, just because a similarity cuts across various ethnic groups does not make it impervious to ethnicity. Rather it should be viewed as a commonality integral to each of their ethnic identities, or as Avtar Brah puts it 'ethnicities are always gendered'⁴⁸. The study's failure to appreciate this underlines its reliance on binary opposites in interpreting the women's responses. One other point worthy of emphasis in this regard is the lack of commentary on data indicating similarities between white and Asian respondents, and between white and Afro-Caribbean respondents. Thus, for example, the authors discuss at some length how Asian women were less likely to identify with the characters in *The Accused*, but leave the similarity between white and Afro-Caribbean women of being more able to relate to the characters completely without interpretation. Similarly, there is no exploration of why Asian women and white women were twice as unlikely as Afro-Caribbean women to suggest that the rape scene should not be screened on television. Rather than be challenged into pointing out how the complex pattern of group responses highlights the inadequacy of understanding ethnicity within a framework of binary opposites, the study avoids comment altogether.

My critique of Women Viewing Violence has emphasised the importance of framing ethnic identity as variable and contingent and specific to the context of interaction in question. In this regard a significant contribution of Bobo's research is that it provides a clear illustration of the need to tailor questions of ethnic identity to the specific focus of investigation, in Bobo's case - the act of viewing a mainstream text. Her approach is thus alert to the collision of factors as varied as respondents' expectations; how they have been historically represented in mainstream texts; the desire to extract pleasure that is integral to the act of viewing/consumption; personal experiences of the issues represented in the text, as well as cultural codes and frames of reference negotiated in the broader context of everyday relations. However, this more complex contextualisation of ethnic identity with the act of viewing is, unfortunately, not a consistent feature of Bobo's approach. Here a third key observation can be

⁴⁸Cartographies of Diaspora. (London, Routledge, 1996), p126

highlighted with regards examining ethnicity as an open signifier which relates to interpreting the 'cultural resistance' of audiences.

Keeping 'cultural resistance' in context

There is a sense in which Bobo's eagerness to explain the 'overwhelming positive response of black women' overtakes her relationship with the respondents and her interpretation of both their comments and that of other audiences. For example, given that Bobo's own reading of *The Color Purple* is comparable to that of many black men who saw the film as reinforcing racist stereotypes, it is surprising that she is dismissive of the force of anger relayed in the comments from men whilst completely accommodating the women's positive reactions. She writes, 'that many black women clung tightly to their positive feelings about *The Color Purple* was significant in that it allowed them to extract meaningful elements when others were issuing decrees that there should be a wholesale rejection of the film'⁴⁹.

Bobo is right to oppose the men's demands for censorship but wrong to position their anger as the binary opposite of the women's positive engagement. The men's antipathy is as much a negotiated reading as the women's peremptory support, also involving past experiences as consumers of mainstream texts and therefore also requiring considered commentary and investigation. The drawback of Bobo's research is not that her empirical enquiry focuses on one particular reading, but that the subtext underlying her discussion positions this reading as simultaneously antagonistic and superior to others. Ironically black men's reactions are presented as irrational even though they are closer to Bobo's own textual analysis. References to white audiences are equally reductive for their embeddedness in the observation that the film was made for white audiences thereby implying that white people would uncritically accept the racist images.

The complex interaction between black female audiences and *The Color Purple* that Bobo sets out to investigate becomes a defensive monologue highlighting the critical agency of black women. Bobo does in fact acknowledge that her small sample of mainly affluent, middle class African-American women 'cannot be used in a one-size-

⁴⁹Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), p93

fits-all manner'⁵⁰, but this acknowledgement does not prevent her from making 'holistic' group comparisons. Perhaps more importantly, she fails to problematise the implications of the women's inattention to the racist stereotypes to the broader issue of 'cultural resistance'. As Ien Ang argues, 'what is at issue is not so much to give ordinary audiences a pat on their backs for doing so well in 'resisting'; what is at stake [...] are the contradictions encountered and negotiated in the ordinary practices of living in a postmodern world'⁵¹. From this perspective it might be argued that, the identification of a 'reconstructed meaning' does not make black women's positive reading of a text which reinforces racist stereotypes of their own ethnic group any less contradictory, and should be evaluated as such. By failing to do this Bobo overplays the 'cultural resistance' signified by black women's positive reading of *The Colour Purple*.

This is an appropriate point at which to introduce Marie Gillespie's work which develops a more complex understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and audience activity than both Bobo's research and Women Viewing Violence. The latter two pieces of work clearly illustrate that ethnic identity is a significant influence on people's readings of texts. But ethnic relations themselves remain unaffected by the act of viewing. Even in Bobo's study, which I indicated was more careful to tailor the question of ethnicity to the specific context of viewing, the critical dialogue between audience and text is projected as being one way. The women are shown to draw on their negotiated identities and frames of reference to deconstruct meanings from the text. But the study is unable to address any possibilities for cultural change because Spielberg's film and other mainstream texts are presented as being detached from the diverse tastes, experiences and opinions of their audiences. In this respect, Gillespie's study can be seen to highlight a fourth dimension to examining ethnicity as an open signifier in its assertion that ethnic identity and audience activity are interlocked in a reciprocal process of cultural negotiation and change. Before discussing this aspect of her work I introduce her study.

⁵⁰ibid., p91

⁵¹Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge), p14

Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change

Gillespie's research into the televisual culture of South Asians living in the London Borough of Southall constitutes one of the few empirical studies that incorporate, within its own analytical framework, contemporary theories of 'hybridity'. She describes her research as bringing 'together for the first time: the cultures of migrant and diasporic communities; and the cultures of media consumption'⁵² and as such bears particular affinity with my own overall aims for this thesis. In this regard the following critique can be seen to act as a basis for establishing an empirical precedence for my own research and more specifically for identifying potential difficulties.

Gillespie declares that her interest in the patterns of media consumption and reception amongst South Asians began in the early 1980s when she was a teacher in Southall. Her subsequent MA and PhD theses engaged in detailed ethnographic research and provided the content for several published essays⁵³ which are brought together in her book Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change. It is her book that is the main focus for this critique.

The fieldwork on which Gillespie constructs a 'cultural map' of her informants' use of the media was undertaken during 1988-1991. The term "'cultural map' of the audience' is drawn from David Morley to refer to how patterns of media consumption and reception can help identify 'who shares which cultural codes and meaning systems and to what extent'⁵⁴. Gillespie's overriding focus is on the 14-18 age group but not exclusive to it and she distinguishes three 'non-systematic' phases to her fieldwork for which she deploys 'a multiplicity of data gathering strategies'. These

⁵²Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p1

⁵³see for example 'Technology and Tradition: Audio-Visual Culture among South Asian Families in West London', in Cultural Studies 3/2, (1989) pp 226-239
'The Role of TV in the Negotiation of Cultural Identities and Differences Among Punjabi Londoners', in The Portrayals of Ethnic Minorities on Television, edited by A. Millwood-Hargreave (London, Broadcasting Standards Council, Research Working Paper VII, 1992)
'Soap Opera, Gossip and rumour in a Punjabi Town in West London', in National Identity and Europe: The TV Revolution, edited by P. Drummond, R. Paterson & J. Willis, (London, BFI, 1993)
'Sacred Serials, Devotional Viewing and Domestic Worship', in To Be Continued, edited by R. Allen (London, Routledge, 1994)

⁵⁴David Morley, 'Reconceptualising the Media Audience: Towards an Ethnography of Audiences', (Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1975), Occasional Paper

include a questionnaire survey, structured interviews, informal group discussions as well as recollections of conversations in 'naturalistic' settings such as the playground, morning registration, parties and weddings. The three fieldwork phases subtitled, 'groundwork', 'immersion' and 'focussing' chart Gillespie's changing status from being, an outsider (seeking to establish relations of trust and a broad understanding of the peer culture and patterns of media consumption of her respondents) to, a regular at 'peer and family' gatherings (able to access the wider social networks and settings of her informants and their interaction with the media), and finally, a casual listener and participant of everyday casual conversations of her respondents and their 'ritualistic post-mortems of last nights telly'⁵⁵.

Gillespie's presentation of the data gathered is not bound or structured by the distinct phases of fieldwork. Rather, she mixes quantitative statistics with qualitative comments to journey through various aspects of her respondents' audio-visual culture. For example, she examines the significance of the VCR in the domestic context and how, amongst other things, it enabled many families to have more control and choice of texts than that provided by British television. She also presents 'a contrastive analysis' of one family's reactions to two televisual versions, one Indian and the other 'western', of *The Mahabharata* - a sacred text of the Hindu religion, as an example of how two distinctive reservoirs of cultural knowledge and experience are mobilised to confront and negotiate issues of identity and difference⁵⁶. Another chapter examines young people's engagement with television advertisements which, along with their avid following and talk about soaps such as *Neighbours*, are seen to serve 'as resources for the reflexive exploration of cultural differences and for the articulation of both real and imaginary options'⁵⁷. Gillespie's study is thus both wide-ranging and extensive. My critique is not organised around a comprehensive analysis of each aspect of her study but is selectively structured around two fundamental points. Firstly, how issues of 'race' and ethnic identity are contextualised and addressed

⁵⁵Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p64

⁵⁶From Sanskrit to Sacred Soap: A Case study in the Reception of Two Contemporary TV Versions of the *Mahabharata*', in Reading Audiences, edited by D. Buckingham (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993), pp70-71

⁵⁷Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p27

within the methodological framework. And secondly, what insights into the process of identity negotiation, and more specifically the dynamics of cultural change, are provided by the findings.

Gillespie acknowledges that her research sample does not constitute a 'neat equation between culture, community and geography'⁵⁸. The vast majority of her respondents, like the overall population of Southall, are of Punjabi Sikh background with smaller numbers of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In addition to religious differences the respondents are further differentiated by regional, caste, linguistic and socio-economic background. Furthermore, global patterns of migration combined with modern communication systems have created and sustained a web of connections between families in Southall and those residing in various other parts of Britain as well as the world.

To identify a methodological framework responsive to the transcultural and dispersed history of her sample Gillespie draws significantly on the work of Gilroy and Hall, amongst others, to develop a 'diasporic perspective' to capture the ways in which the identities of her respondents 'have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction'⁵⁹. She describes the body of work 'on 'black' British identities as being the most theoretically advanced within the whole field of cultural studies and more specifically in relation to postmodern debates about cultural identity'⁶⁰. Within her overall framework, the work of 'diaspora intellectuals' is situated to clarify the objectives and specific contribution of her own study. Thus, she notes that her research is allied to Hall's view of constructing a 'positive conception of ethnicity', effectively dissociating it from the discourse of racism and positioning it within the politics of *difference*. She also observes that the work of Hall et al occupies a 'theoretically privileged view' in as much as it is developed at an 'abstract level' through a focus on the 'expressive cultures' (of music, film, fashion etc) of black people in Britain. With respect to this Gillespie describes

⁵⁸:ibid., p2

⁵⁹:ibid., p7

⁶⁰:ibid., p6

her own work as adopting a novel approach to examining diaspora cultures. In place of abstract theorising she deploys ethnographic methods, and instead of examining 'expressive cultures' she focuses on 'cultures of consumption'. A combination which she feels enables a 'clearer understanding of what the 'reinvention of ethnicity' means in practice [...] as it is negotiated in everyday discourse'⁶¹. Indeed Gillespie's findings underscore the importance of undertaking empirical contestations of abstract theories of 'cultural hybridity' in order to assess the latter's relevance for understanding everyday cultural realities. This observation simultaneously informs and substantiates the methodological framework of this thesis and its own emphasis on empirical analysis (see chapter 7).

It is the shifting conceptions of identity embodied within the notion of diaspora that Gillespie aims 'to identify and track' in the context of her respondents' engagement with the media. And her approach does provide some valuable insights into the relationship between ethnic identity and audience activity. For example, television and other communication technologies are identified as providing important contexts for 'self-narration and identity negotiation'. In other words ethnic identity doesn't simply inform/influence viewers' use and reception of the media, but media texts and technologies are themselves 'implicated in the re-making of ethnicity'. This is one of the central observations emerging from Gillespie's examination of the rapid popularity of the VCR amongst Southall's Asian population and can be marked out as the fourth key observation informing my own approach to investigate the relationship between negotiations of 'race' and ethnicity and audience activity as a complex and two way process.

Responding to the significance of 'race' and ethnicity variables to audience activity as a two way process

Gillespie notes how most Southall households acquired VCRs well in advance of many indigenous British households 'as a response to the social and cultural marginalisation of minorities from the mainstream of British society'⁶². The VCR

⁶¹ibid., p8

⁶²ibid., p79

transformed the weekend outing to local cinemas to watch Indian films by bringing them directly into the living room and establishing them as a central focus of everyday domestic interaction. By affording more choice and increased access to culturally distinct texts the VCR gave rise to a trend where culturally diverse media were increasingly being consumed within the same setting. Gillespie observes some fundamental outcomes arising from this situation with direct implications for the process of cultural change. This brings me to the second focal question for this appraisal of Gillespie's study - 'what do Gillespie's findings reveal about the dynamics of identity negotiation and its relationship to the process of cultural change?'

I have already noted Gillespie's identification of her respondents' engagement with culturally diverse media as requiring competence in different linguistic and cultural codes. The negotiation between these competing systems of representation effectively involves the occupation of a plurality of cultural spaces. As Gillespie points out, what we have then is precisely the kind of context in which cultural change and negotiation of 'new' ethnicities becomes possible. The participants in Gillespie's study occupy a culturally hybrid location of simultaneously being 'Punjabi', 'British', 'Asian' and 'Sikh' which are further cross cut by other 'axes of difference' such as gender, class, sexuality and so on. Interaction with such culturally diverse texts as *Neighbours* and popular Indian films encourages a manoeuvring between these different identities, thereby heightening awareness of cultural differences and fragmenting the individual's sense of self. As such, 'multiple subject positions' collide providing a resource through which individuals assess and (re)define their position in relation to their family, their peers and society at large. Gillespie's findings emphasise that there is no uniformity of response to these culturally fragmented encounters.

For example she describes how the appropriation of Indian and American films across generations of family members in Southall represented a mixture of 'hardening' as well as 'dissolving' of cultural boundaries. Elders tended to use Indian films to 'impart knowledge and to foster cultural and religious traditions (such as arranged marriages and strong family ties) while young people used them to deconstruct

‘traditional culture’ and to open up its contradictions’⁶³. This process of refining conceptions of one’s own culture and collective identity was not specific to images of the respondents’ own community or group. Engagement with media representation of ‘others’ was found to be equally significant. For instance, viewing and talking about ‘western’ soaps, such as *Neighbours*, was identified as a main stimulus for everyday interactions in Southall. Within the daily retelling of storylines fiction and real experiences become interwoven such that, ‘Southall family life is compared and contrasted with ‘white culture on the box’’⁶⁴.

We can see then that the media resources available in Southall households and the patterns of consumption charted by Gillespie’s in-depth study echo the complex and culturally fragmented nature of modern identities emphasised by hybridity theorists. But what of the other themes that are integral to those ‘abstract’ expositions of modern cultural formations which advance the key concepts of hybridity and diaspora beyond a mere collision of cultures and into the realm of ‘racially transgressive’ cultural politics. This aspect of Gillespie’s work is quite disjointed and some of her conclusions questionable. A number of contributory factors can be identified for this weakness which mainly relate to a lack of theoretical rigour as well as a lapse into the analytical deficiencies identified in my earlier examination of the Women Viewing Violence and Bobo’s studies. I deal with these first before exposing the limitations of Gillespie’s conclusions.

Earlier I noted that Gillespie foregrounds a ‘diasporic perspective’ to accommodate the internal differences amongst her respondents and the multiple sources of identity that fragment their common experiences as ‘Asians’. Unfortunately the complexity that her theoretical framework demands is not adequately translated into her interpretation of the data. Two examples illustrate the respective deficiencies.

Gillespie’s awareness of the religious, linguistic and cultural differences in her sample does not prevent her from homogenising the diverse terms of reference that her respondents draw upon in their engagement with the media. This is most vividly

⁶³ibid., p87

⁶⁴ibid., p174

apparent in her attempts to track and discuss the appropriation and significance of popular Indian films in the domestic context. To begin with she establishes a reductive description of Indian films by asserting, 'indeed, many film-makers and theorists claim that there are only two 'metatexts', the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and that every film can be traced back to these sources'⁶⁵. Leaving aside the issue of how in/valid this conception of Indian films might be, the more important issue for Gillespie's study is to what extent the perceptions of her respondents, and their specific points of engagement with Indian films, challenge or support the description she provides. But she fails to problematise this and what in fact unfolds are some highly confusing if not erroneous assertions about the relationship between text and subject. For example, she specifies that the films are used by elders to 'impart religious knowledge'. Yet the 'metatexts' she locates at the centre of Indian films are specific to the Hindu religion whilst the majority of her sample is of Punjabi Sikh background with smaller numbers of Hindus and Muslims. How might Sikhs and Muslims use texts specific to Hinduism to impart knowledge about their own religion? I am not saying that this is an impossible outcome but it is rather more complex than Gillespie's discussion attests. Moreover, the erosion of difference that occurs as a result of her assertion serves to homogenise her sample and runs contrary to the analytical framework she identifies for her study through a foregrounding of a 'diaspora perspective'.

The lack of critical application and evaluation of a 'diaspora perspective' and its relevance to making sense of her respondents' use of the media is captured in the claim, 'these may be 'diaspora kids' but their aspirations for travel and lifestyle are essentially American'⁶⁶. The implication here is that 'aspirations for an essentially American lifestyle' are at odds with the diaspora concept. Once again whilst this connection is not implausible, what Gillespie does not provide is any commentary on precisely why the 'American aspirations' cannot be accommodated by abstract theories of diaspora and hybridity. But there is an even more fundamental point which Gillespie fails to engage: what her findings denote in terms of revisions or additions in order for the diaspora concept to adequately apprehend the everyday cultures and

⁶⁵ibid., p83

realities of her respondents. This is quite important if only to justify the use of the term 'diaspora kids' for describing a group of people in pursuit of 'an idealised American dream'. Having said that, Gillespie's identification of her respondents' American aspirations is itself dubious and requires some critical exposition as it raises some fundamental questions about the cogency of her overall interpretation of her data.

Gillespie's postulation of the American aspirations of her respondents stems from a number of instances during fieldwork where various Western cultural products, practices, images and styles were projected as being superior to Eastern, or more specifically Indian, ones. She observes how, looking 'classy' or 'cool' was associated with combining expensive and well-cut clothes to exhibit a look resembling the styles in fashion magazines such as *GQ* and *Arena* for boys, and *Just Seventeen* and *More* for girls. Those considered to be at the bottom end of the fashion hierarchy were referred to as 'pendus' and were 'viewed disdainfully as 'modern versions' of their parents' wearing 'strong, uncoordinated colours and inappropriate combinations of [...] traditional 'Indian' dress with a version of 'western' style [...] attempting - and failing - to look 'westernised''⁶⁷. The word 'pendu', meaning village, was also associated with Indian food which many of Gillespie's respondents deemed less appealing than food from outlets such as McDonalds and Pizza Hut. Interwoven into the preference for Western styles and products was an investment in the images of happiness, freedom, and 'racial harmony' with which the respective products have become conjoined through advertising campaigns launched by the likes of McDonalds and Coca Cola.

In her concluding comments Gillespie argues that her respondents' investment in American representations of a utopian dream should not be understood as gullibility, but 'as the desire for full integration into a pluralistic society where the social implications of cultural differences are minimal'⁶⁸. To support this argument Gillespie presents extracts from her interviews in which the young people's discussion of

⁶⁶ibid., p40

⁶⁷ibid., p186

⁶⁸ibid., p204

American advertisements integrates a critical exposition of their own lives. Within their 'ad talk' they simultaneously express 'aspirations toward a greater participation in mainstream British society' and a 'desire to establish some degree of independence from the family culture'⁶⁹. In other words it is the themes of 'autonomy' and 'utopian talk' of the Coca Cola and McDonald's ads to which the young people are attracted and not to the fact that they are American.

In light of her own observations it is surprising that Gillespie collapses her respondents' lifestyle preferences as 'essentially American'. In effect, Gillespie does not do justice to the complexity of her empirical data and observations because she inflects a binary framework of cultural relations in the course of interpreting and presenting her findings. This becomes all the more apparent when we consider that her respondents' 'denigration of aspects of Indian culture' sits alongside critical expositions and often rejection of Western representations of 'Indian' or 'Asian' culture. The latter is notably illustrated in Gillespie's case study of the Dhani family's reactions to two culturally contrasting televisual depictions of *The Mahabharata*. The various members of the Dhani family expressed an overwhelming preference for the Indian version produced by the Indian television channel Doordharsan, perceiving it to be more sensitive to the cultural context of its subject matter. Their 'distaste' for Peter Brook's theatrical Western production was based on a critical appraisal alert to the flouting of visual and cultural codes which were seen to culminate in a text baldly ignorant of 'the social and ritual processes of Hindu culture and society'⁷⁰. My point is simply that there is no clear-cut pattern in Gillespie's findings which supports the conclusion that the lifestyle aspirations of her respondents are allied specifically to 'Western' or 'American' or 'British', or for that matter 'Indian', ideals.

It is important to point out that these criticisms are not being asserted to dismiss or invalidate Gillespie's specific observations of the 'hierarchy of cultures' or the 'denigration of popular Indian culture'. Indeed similar trends emerge from my own empirical research (see pp159-168). What I am contesting is Gillespie's particular interpretation of the negotiations of cultural identity among her informants.

⁶⁹ibid., pp197-200

⁷⁰ibid., p93

The weaknesses in Gillespie's work draw attention to the difficulties of contextualising abstract theories of hybridity to empirical investigation. They also highlight the force with which a 'common sense' analogy continues to dominate perceptions and attitudes towards specific cultural practices such as arranged marriage. Two observations clarify the point being made. Firstly, in Gillespie's work issues such as arranged marriage are established as markers for assessing and differentiating between individuals open to cultural change and those resistant to it. The problem of positioning these issues in such a way is that the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' become framed in the same language as 'common sense' racism. All this achieves is to establish a hierarchy of diaspora or hybrid cultures ordered by the extent to which they oppose certain practices deemed 'backward' or 'outdated'. This is precisely what happens when Gillespie frames the conflict around arranged marriages as tradition versus cultural change. The second point is that issues such as arranged marriage and the desire for more autonomy are real issues being confronted, debated and negotiated by significant sections of the British Asian population. That their very mention evokes stereotypes about 'Asian' culture should not excuse their analysis in the hope that one day they may dissolve into insignificance. As the findings from my own two case studies highlight, one of the challenges for empirical researchers seriously interested in charting and examining the complexity of modern identities is to reposition those same cultural relations previously colonised by the language of racism within a framework of continuously shifting conceptions of identity. Isn't this precisely the challenge posed by Hall's assertion of detaching ethnicity from the discourses of imperialism and racism? From this position we might disassociate the practice of arranged marriage as signifying an essentialist Asian identity and instead assess its shifting significance for different individuals within the Asian diaspora in different contexts. Advocating the practice of arranged marriage does not indicate a 'traditional' Asian any more than rejection of it indicates a 'diasporic' individual.

In many ways the first case study - but also the thesis as a whole - can be seen to be an extension of Gillespie's empirical enquiry into the process of cultural change

signified by the negotiations of cultural identity among South Asians in Britain. There are of course many differences in our research designs, most notably in that Gillespie maintains a focus on media consumption whereas my own focus shifts cultural realms from video usage to religious identities. In this respect the main strength of Gillespie's study is compromised in my own research in that the in-depth and long term aspects of her fieldwork are precisely what allow her to track how, over a period of time, media technologies and texts play an informative role in people's perceptions of who they are and how they differ from 'others'. By comparison, my own research constitutes two 'one-off', so to speak, encounters with the individuals participating in each study and cannot provide the in-depth insight into the process of cultural change that Gillespie is able to. However, the short-term nature of my empirical data collection has freed up more space than in Gillespie's discussion to scrutinise abstract conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' in much more detail. In that sense the limitations of Gillespie's work that were identified above are directly addressed in my own thesis by its emphasis on engaging an in-depth critique of the work of hybridity theorists (see chapter 2), but also crucially undertaking a direct dialogue with the empirical data and conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. Thus, my own research objectives include contestations of, and where appropriate revisions to, abstract theorisations of 'cultural hybridity' in order that they are more attuned to understanding everyday realities.

Whilst the discussion in this section has focussed on material from the field of audience research its particular contextualisation of mobilising 'race' and ethnicity variables in the 'natural' setting has broader significance for all empirical research. In this regard the discussion should be viewed as establishing a precedent for how the thesis as a whole understands and engages issues of 'race' and ethnicity across the two case studies.

Muslim Identities and the (Im)Possibilities of Cultural Change

In contrast to the quantitative approach of the first case study the empirical investigation into young Muslim identities constitutes a small scale qualitative enquiry. The reasons for preferring a qualitative investigation for the second case study are outlined in chapter 5 where I also assess its strengths and limitations. This section prepares the ground for establishing key points through which to assess the

in/compatibility of the narratives of the ten individuals participating in the second case study with the principles of 'cultural hybridity'. Bhabha and the recently deceased Said have been singled out as the focus for this discussion because within their written work they directly address how the cultural politics of 'ordinary' Muslims are aligned to their own investments in 'cultural hybridity'. My analysis of their commentaries identifies five overall themes, as outlined in the introduction to this chapter (see p12), which position the cultural politics of Muslims as resisting the kind of cross-cultural encounters from which hybridity theorists envisage the emergence of a 'racially transgressive cultural politics'. The five themes provide a framework for organising the discussion in this section and I return to them in chapter 6 to contest the Muslim identities emerging from my own empirical research.

Before identifying and examining the five main points through which Bhabha and Said establish the static and culturally enclosed status of Muslims it is appropriate to describe the context in which each writer makes his observations.

Bhabha's 'ascriptive migrants'

Homi Bhabha's interpretation of the cultural politics of 'ordinary' Muslims is confined to a few pages in chapter 11 of his book The Location of Culture. The focus for his observations is the 'Satanic Verses affair' and he describes the individuals he is writing about, i.e. the protestors against Salman Rushdie's book, as 'Islamic fundamentalists'. Bhabha's understanding of the protests asserted by Muslims are set against and defined by his own reading of Rushdie's book.

Within his overall thesis for The Location of Culture Bhabha positions The Satanic Verses and other works of Rushdie, such as Shame and Midnight's Children, alongside Toni Morrison's Beloved, Nadine Gordimer's My Son's Story, Renee Green's Sites of Genealogy and various other works, to expose 'a transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities'⁷¹. For Bhabha it is a particular kind of 'encounter with 'newness'' that links these various works. This 'newness' refutes a neat 'past-present' continuum. Rather, it is reflective of an 'in-between space' in which the relationship between past and present acquires a

⁷¹The Location of Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994), p5

contingent, as opposed to linear, character. Bhabha perceives the various works to which he refers as being concerned with the 're-telling of existing histories' which can be distinguished from the 'production of alternative histories'. In other words, the real value of the works thus referenced is that they exploit and speak from the position of interconnectedness of the histories of different cultures and 'races' to reveal an 'interstitial intimacy' through which 'bridging the home and the world' becomes possible.

In the case of The Satanic Verses Bhabha suggests that the conditions for 'newness to come into the world' are created by Rushdie's reinterpretation of the Quran through the medium of the novel. The result is that 'other enunciatory positions and possibilities in the framework of Koranic reading'⁷² are revealed. A sacred text is retold in the genre of melodrama and, in the process, the Quran's close association with authenticity and tradition is displaced by 'a poetics of relocation and reinscription'. For Bhabha, the re-naming of the Prophet Mohammed as Mahound and the naming of prostitutes after the Prophet's wives might well be deemed 'blasphemous', but in the sense of 'a secular transgressive act of cultural translation'. The notion of 'cultural translation' is Bhabha's central point of analysis for presenting Muslim protests against The Satanic Verses as indicative of how identities grounded in religious doctrine, in this case Islam, are resistant to cultural change. More specifically, the protestors' demands for Rushdie's book to be banned are interpreted as a refusal to engage an internally critical dialogue of Islam and a desire to protect a 'pure' notion of their faith.

In Rushdie's novel the 'act of cultural translation', and by implication blasphemy, becomes a survival tool for the central protagonist Saladin Chamcha who is first disillusioned with his paternal identity, and then fails to better his life in England as an assimilated migrant. Bhabha argues that Chamcha, 'caught in-between a 'nativist', even nationalist atavism and a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation [...] stands, quite literally, in-between two border conditions'⁷³. His predicament is resolved from

⁷²ibid., p226

⁷³ibid., p224

within the interstitial space that arises from ‘the indeterminacy of diasporic identity’ where he is no longer constrained by the idea of a purity of origins but occupies a more ‘empowering condition of hybridity’. In Bhabha’s schema the essence of Rushdie’s novel, ‘the anxiety of the irresolvable, borderline culture of hybridity’⁷⁴, is precisely what becomes obscured in the arguments asserted by Islamic fundamentalists whom he describes as preoccupied with claiming ‘the moral high ground’. He writes, ‘the conflict of cultures and community around *The Satanic Verses* has been mainly represented in spatial terms and binary geopolitical polarities - Islamic fundamentalists vs. Western literary modernists, the quarrel of the ancient (ascriptive) migrants and modern (ironic) metropolitans’⁷⁵.

In Bhabha’s projection of the relationship between the ‘fundamentalists’ and ‘literary modernists’ five assumptions in particular about the way in which he positions the cultural outlook of ‘ordinary’ Muslims can be extrapolated and questioned. I examine these after introducing the context in which Said makes his observations.

Said’s ‘untutored masses’

My analysis of Edward Said’s perspective on the cultural outlook of ‘ordinary’ Muslims is based on his observations about the ‘Satanic Verses affair’ as well as the more recent ‘terrorist’ attacks on America on September 11th 2001. Before embarking on this discussion it is appropriate to note that right up to his recent death Said’s scholarly activities were driven by a devotion to deconstructing European colonialism and more specifically European ‘deformations’ of ‘Islam’ and the ‘East’. In fact his most popular work *Orientalism* has been recognised as a founding text for releasing the study of colonial discourse⁷⁶. Said’s work can thus be acknowledged as emerging from a different critical focus than Bhabha’s. I note this distinction simply to highlight the fact that Said’s observations about Muslims ran in conjunction with a lifetime’s commitment to critically analysing the historical relations between the ‘West’ and ‘Islam’. By comparison, Islam and Muslims do not occupy such a central

⁷⁴ibid., p225

⁷⁵ibid., p224

⁷⁶Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, (London, Routledge, 1993)

status within Bhabha's scholarly activities which are more critically driven by a concern with the 'migrant' condition. In that sense one might view Said's comments as being more critically informed about the dynamics of contemporary Muslim identities.

With respect to his analysis of Muslim responses to The Satanic Verses Said highlights the 'drastic change' in Rushdie's status after the publication of the book. He begins,

Before *The Satanic Verses* appeared in 1988, Rushdie was already a problematic figure for the English [...], to many Indians and Pakistanis in England and the subcontinent, however, he was not only a celebrated author they were proud of but also a champion of immigrants' rights and a severe critic of nostalgic imperialists. After the *fatwa* [...] he became anathema to his former admirers.⁷⁷

Said goes on to suggest that the shift in attitude towards Rushdie is not 'intelligible' without reference to a world media system which has, 'through the production of out-of-scale transnational images, very efficiently knitted together the various imagined communities that make up the world'. He is of course referring to the type of sensationalist media coverage which functions to present complex arguments in black and white and more often than not reinforces stereotypes that induce fear and hatred of the 'designated enemy'. In the case of ongoing widespread condemnations and fears of Islam, Said suggests that this has been primarily achieved through the overscale media images of 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism'. Such 'gigantic caricatural essentialisations' are, Said argues, reductive but so powerful in maintaining systems of subordination that the 'enemy' is effectively seduced into a 'border war' which becomes a mere 'expression of essentialisations':

[...] these patterns of orthodoxy and self aggrandizement [...] are answered alas, with corresponding finality by the designated enemies. Thus, Muslims or Africans or Indians or Japanese, in their idioms and from within their own

⁷⁷Culture and Imperialism, (London, Vintage, 1993), p373

threatened localities, attack the West, or Americanization, or imperialism, with little more attention to detail, critical differentiation, discrimination, and distinction than has been lavished on them by the West.⁷⁸

In Said's analysis of the 'border wars' both sides of the 'them' and 'us' divide are bestowed with a 'blind patriotic' following. The mass support for 'early third world nationalisms' and the 'stunning acquiescence' of many Muslims against The Satanic Verses are just two examples of how the majority of postcolonial subjects are bound together by 'insensate polemic'. Further, because their actions in opposition to or defence of the various idioms lack critical engagement, the resulting 'border wars' become permanently locked in a stalemate. In mapping a more progressive response to what he calls *deformations* (for example 'the West' and 'Islam'), Said constantly references the work of secular literary and intellectual figures, from the more prominent such as C.L.R. James, Toni Morrison and V.S. Naipaul to the lesser known like the Arab poet Ali Ahmed Said (alias Adonis).

The 'border wars' that Said identifies to describe dominant reactions to The Satanic Verses can also be seen to inform his observations about the '9/11' 'terrorist' attacks on The Pentagon and The World Trade Centre. Said's first written reaction to the Sept 11th attacks was published within a few days of the event, in the September 16th issue of *The Observer*⁷⁹. Just over a month later his three part essay titled 'The Clash of Ignorance' was the feature piece in the magazine *The Nation*⁸⁰. In both essays Said devotes much of his attention to exposing how 'terrorists' and Western policy makers alike continue to draw heavily upon enormous entities such as the 'West' and 'Islam' to make sense of hugely complicated matters like identity and culture. Across both essays Said makes an attempt to distinguish the actions of not just 'ordinary' Muslims from 'terrorists' but also 'ordinary' Westerners from Western policymakers. But, as I illustrate more clearly below, there is no fundamental difference in Said's understanding of the political outlook of the 'terrorists' and 'ordinary' Muslims in

⁷⁸ibid., p376

⁷⁹titled 'Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners'

⁸⁰published in the October 22nd 2001 issue of *The Nation*

that both are seen to affiliate to a static homogenous conception of Islam which forecloses any possibilities for cultural change. Further, as in his discussion in Culture and Imperialism it is the position of the secular that is singled out as offering hope for overcoming 'border wars'.

Four of the five assumptions underlying Bhabha's observations about Muslim identities can also be identified in Said's analyses which I now discuss.

Devotion to Islam as the basis of 'Muslim unity'

A main feature of Bhabha and Said's respective commentaries is the suggestion that Muslims are bound together by their devotion to a totalising and holistic conception of Islam. In Bhabha's case this is achieved through his use of the term Islamic fundamentalism to describe those Muslims who protested against The Satanic Verses. Yet with respect to the identity of the protestors, how they related to and observed Islam in their everyday lives, Bhabha tells us nothing. In fact the only 'shared' characteristic that can be identified in Bhabha's discussion of the protestors is their objection to Rushdie's particular interpretation of the Quran. So we might presume from this that the term Islamic fundamentalist is deemed to be a relevant description of the protestors on the grounds of their unanimous aversion to criticism of their faith, what might be described as an 'irrational fundamentalism'. In relation to this Bhabha himself singles out the focus on the renaming of Mohammed as Mahound and the characterisation of his wives as prostitutes. Let's for arguments sake assume that these were the kinds of elements fuelling the anger of Muslims, then we must ask 'was their anger justified?'. In answer to this it is useful to point out that, for many Muslims, there is a very clear resonance between the examples singled out by Bhabha and racist media representations of Islam as illustrated by the following extract from *The Sun* newspaper:

[...] the government has decided to scrap the old A is for Apple, B is for Ball, C is for Cat method and introduce and introduce a new alphabet tailored to the needs of Muslim pupils. From next term all schools will be required to use the following system.

‘A is for Ayatollah, B is for Baghdad, C is for Curry [...], J is for Jihad, K is for Khomeini, M is for Mecca, N is for nan [...], Y is for Yasser Arafat, Z is for Zionist Imperialist Aggressor Running Dogs of the Great Satan.’

The Sun, 12 November 1991⁸¹

The analogy I’m proposing here, between Rushdie’s work and the rhetoric of *The Sun*, might be questioned for the reason that the track record and political intentions of the two are easily distinguishable. For example, as Said points out, before the publication of *The Satanic Verses* many Pakistanis and Indians in Britain and the subcontinent regarded Rushdie as a ‘champion of immigrants’ rights and a severe critic of nostalgic imperialists’⁸². By comparison, *The Sun* is generally recognised as having racist tendencies and in particular anti-immigrant prejudice. However, the analogy I am proposing is not being asserted to dispute the particular ethics and intentions of Rushdie or his book, but to draw attention to the fact that the protests against *The Satanic Verses* might need to be considered within the broader context of Muslim opposition to Islamophobia. This is the line of interpretation adopted by Peter van der Veer in his observations of the ‘book burnings’. He writes:

These Muslim readers are not necessarily fundamentalists at all; their religious ideas are just as hybrid and syncretic as those of the author. They, too, are migrants, but the sources of their identity are authenticated not by profane literary texts but by what are to them sacred religious traditions. It is ironic, therefore, to find that migrants who are at the vanguard of political resistance to the assimilative tendencies of the nation state, who have their own cultural project for living hybrid cultural lives in a non-Islamic nation - expressed for example in a demand for state-funded Muslim schools or an extension of the blasphemy laws - are condemned, while the postmodern hybrid novelist is celebrated by liberals and the state, extolled for his struggle against that very

⁸¹Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia, It’s Features and Dangers*, (London, The Runnymede Trust, 1997a), p13

⁸²Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London, Vintage, 1993), p373

oppositional resistance, against the supposed 'backwardness' of the 'fundamentalist' British Muslim community.⁸³

Like Bhabha's, Said's interpretation of Muslim protests against The Satanic Verses firmly establishes 'pure' religious and ethnic identities as totalising systems which hinder progressive interaction between nation states and different cultures. Reflecting on the anger expressed by Muslims against Rushdie's book Said writes:

Few people during the exhilarating heyday of decolonisation and early third world nationalism were watching or paying close attention to how a carefully nurtured nativism in the anti-colonial ranks grew and grew to inordinately large proportions. All those nationalist appeals to pure or authentic Islam, or to Afrocentrism, negritude, or Arabism had a strong response, without sufficient consciousness that those ethnicities and spiritual essences would come back to exact a very high price from their successful adherents. Fanon was one of the few to remark on the dangers posed to a great socio political movement like decolonisation by an untutored national consciousness. Much the same could be said about the dangers of an untutored religious consciousness⁸⁴.

Said's observations propose several distinct but interrelated characteristics about the cultural politics of 'decolonised' populations. For example, Said identifies a propensity amongst postcolonial subjects to rally around pure religious and ethnic identities as an act of defiance against the subordinate status imposed upon them by colonial rule. Nationalist appeals are mobilised by a powerful few and rallied round by the powerless many. Further the support for 'nationalist' appeals is regarded as an 'uncritical' response. In effect Said identifies a 'blind patriotic nationalism' as driving the action of the protestors which can be seen to be compatible with Bhabha's suggestion of an 'irrational fundamentalism'. Also like Bhabha, Said offers no evidence to confirm that a homogenous religious identity is in operation amongst those Muslims in power and those 'on the street'. This interweaving of the explicit

⁸³'The Enigma of Arrival': Hybridity and Authenticity in the Global Space', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner and T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), p102

⁸⁴Culture and Imperialism, (London, Vintage, 1993), p371

religious rhetoric of Muslim leaders and regimes with the sensibilities of 'ordinary' Muslims also features in Said's analysis of the '9/11' events.

In his three part essay for *The Nation* Said acknowledges that the terrorists have no 'real mandate' for their actions but goes on to add that 'the poor and the desperate are often conned into the magical thinking and quick bloody solutions [...] wrapped in lying religious claptrap'⁸⁵. This particular impression of the relationship between the cultural and political capital of 'ordinary' Muslim people and that of the 'terrorists' is highly contradictory, i.e. on the one hand the 'terrorists' have no mandate, and on the other 'Muslim' populations are easily seduced into the 'magical thinking' of the 'terrorists'. The latter significantly resembles Said's earlier conception of a 'blind patriotism' in his book *Culture and Imperialism*. Once again an uncritical engagement with religion is identified as being seized upon by a few as a means for mobilising 'collective passions'. In the process of making this connection Said's efforts to contain the 'terrorists' to a small group of individuals serves little purpose. In relation to this it should be noted that across the essays being considered here, as in his more detailed works, Said reminds us that Islam and its followers are not a single homogenous entity. Yet, within the context of his overall argument, this point is not contextualised in a manner that might challenge the discourse through which the 'West' has sought to exercise power over the 'Orient'. Here it is useful to note Bobby Sayyid's observation that, '[Said] illustrates the hostility of orientalism to Islam, his 'counter-writing' is directed towards negating orientalism, but the negation of Orientalism is not the affirmation of Islam. This has the effect of turning Said's negation of orientalism into a negation of Islam itself. There is nothing to suggest that he believes that Islam can exist outside the discourse of orientalism'⁸⁶.

The importance of Sayyid's observation is not that we should reject the idea that Muslims of various class and social backgrounds may unite behind a common cause, but that, just because they may unite behind a common cause does not make their religious doctrine a wholly homogenous one. This is an important point for the second case study to confront because the homogenising of Muslims has produced a

⁸⁵<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,6903,552764,00.html> ('Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners' in *The Observer*, September 16th 2001 issue)

'silencing' effect not too dissimilar from that identified by Hall in his appraisal of anti-racist struggles organised around a homogenous conception of black, or what he calls 'identity politics one' (see p69). There are some notable differences between the two instances with respect to 'who' imposes silence upon whom. With reference to 'identity politics one' the silencing is to an extent self-imposed by anti-racists consciously organising behind a common struggle. By comparison, Muslims are homogenised and silenced by 'others', namely commentators who perceive their public unity as indicative of a homogenous identity. Here it is useful to provide an anecdotal example to highlight the acute and disabling impact of 'silencing' currently being experienced by Muslims. This came to my attention in December 2001 at a conference organised by the British Council⁸⁷.

During the main plenary of the conference, Humera Khan, one of the four panellists, described how in the period after the 'September 11th terrorists attacks on America' she felt a distinct sense that people with whom she had joined in the anti-racist movement were now trying to silence the voices of Muslims like her. Whilst not offering specific details, she expressed frustration at the absence of a critical space for many Muslims who, like her, did not condone the terrorists' attacks but wanted to draw attention to the complexity of Muslim feelings which could not wholly endorse the response by America and its allies. Her own anger was intimated in her comment that, 'we've never tried to shut 'them' up in the struggle against racism so don't try and silence us now'. Khan was not referring specifically to figures like Edward Said or Homi Bhabha, but to her personal experience of participating in meetings organised to address the implications of the events of September 11th for 'oppositional' movements. Khan's account indicates how the response of anti-racist movements has not always found it easy to accommodate the cultural outlook of Muslims. In this regard the focus of the second case study provides an opportunity to assess how the 'anti-racism' embedded in the work of hybridity theorists positions itself with regards to the cultural politics of Muslims.

⁸⁶A Fundamental Fear, (London, Zed Books, 1997), p35

⁸⁷The conference titled 'Open Minds' was held on December 11th 2001.

In making the connection between the homogenisation of Muslims within Bhabha and Said's commentaries and the 'silencing' of Muslim voices, I should make absolutely clear that it is not the persona of either writer that is being commented upon. It would be wholly unjust to propose that either writer has ever sought to deny Muslims, or any other group, the right to speak. But the dynamics of 'silencing' do not merely function at the level of having the opportunity to speak aloud. 'Silencing' occurs when an individual or group's voice is not taken seriously or accorded little or no critical value. This brings me to the second assumption embedded in the two writers' expositions of Muslim identities that, as a scripted mode of thought Islam, and by implication those who abide by its principles, are foreclosed to cultural change making their outlooks 'static' and 'primitive'.

The 'static' and 'primitive' status of Islam and Muslims

In Bhabha's case the 'primitive' outlook of Muslims is conveyed through his appropriation of the term 'ancient'. But he does more than simply attach a label. He depicts an image that actually endorses perceptions of Muslims settled in the West as being inferior to their indigenous Western counterparts. To unpack how this is achieved I briefly return to the earlier quote in which Bhabha portrays the actions of religious fundamentalists and literary modernists as being guided by two opposing, yet, equally constricting modes of thought. The main point to note is that at the same time as renouncing both sets of positions Bhabha accords each a distinctly different social and historical status. The adjectives 'ancient' and 'migrant' are referenced to qualify the stance of 'Islamic fundamentalists' and can be contrasted to the appropriation of 'modern' and 'metropolitan' which are allied to the outlook of 'western literary modernists'. Muslim protestors are prescribed the status of an unchanging mass who have come from another time and another place (i.e. ancient migrants). Theirs is a project of asserting a one worldly view which is 'backward' looking (i.e. ascriptive) in that it attempts to replicate the past. The 'western literary modernists' are also seen to have a one worldly view but theirs is a forward looking project defined by a desire to discover new ways of living and being (i.e. modern metropolitans). They speak not as migrants but as an indigenous mass belonging to a superior civilisation which fuels their arrogance (i.e. ironic), safe in the knowledge that the rest of the world will have to follow suit. And so a linear conception of time

and space is transposed to highlight the mutual exclusivity of the two dominant reactions.

Said also invokes a historically linear framework in his evaluation of the transgressive capacity of the cultural identities asserted by the 'terrorists'/'ordinary' Muslims and 'western policymakers'/indigenous western populations. His association of the 'terrorists'' actions with words such as 'primitive', 'fanatical', 'deranged', 'fundamentalists', 'religious zealotry' and so on depicts a harsh image of a group of individuals 'primeval' in their visions of life and 'barbaric' in their strategies for political struggle. And whilst Said is equally unconvinced of the West's commitment to building more inclusive and equal global relations, there is also a distinct absence of the kind of acrimonious value that he projects on to the position of the 'terrorists'. Also, there is no outright rejection of the underlying social and economic principles on which Western societies are built. Situated alongside the 'primitive' outlook and 'barbaric' actions of the 'terrorists', Western societies and populations acquire some sense of 'modern' legitimacy. More to the point the principles of Western societies are projected as being open to cultural change even though the process of change is channelled to further selfish interests and so racially boundaried. By comparison, the outlook of the 'terrorists' offers no potential for cultural change. Admittedly this is a subtle and somewhat implicit concession in Said's writings, but its significance is manifold in its substantiation of a superior/inferior continuum which Said himself, as much as any other critic, has so convincingly exposed as the single most pervasive aspect of 'a system of thought' through which the 'West' has been able to exert power over the 'Orient'⁸⁸.

This is perhaps a very bold assertion to direct at an individual renowned for an unwavering commitment to alleviating the suffering, as well as challenging Western misrepresentations, of Arab Muslims and in particular the people of Palestine. Indeed it would be unfair to arraign Said's work for endorsing a superior/inferior continuum which reinforces colonial discourse without commenting on the fact that when he talks about 'crazed fanatics' and 'deranged fundamentalists' he invariably references phrases such as 'a small group' or 'a tiny band' to indicate he is describing the actions

⁸⁸Edward Said, Orientalism (London, Penguin Books, 1978)

of a relatively small number of individuals. But, his invocation of a historically linear framework does not remain confined to interpreting the position of the major players of the recent crisis (i.e. 'terrorists' and 'Western policy makers'). The same framework is re-invoked to understand the predicament and political sensibilities of the 'ordinary' people of the Western and Muslim worlds.

For example, I established in the previous section that Said uses the notion of 'blind patriotism' to project an image of 'ordinary' Muslims as uncritical and easily seduced by the 'magical thinking' of the 'terrorists'. By comparison, Said's description of the reaction of American citizens to the 'Sept 11th attacks' provokes an image of a 'wounded' people with genuine cause for grief and feelings of retribution. He adds, they are also a people who are in the main politically disengaged and thus lack the critical understanding that would route their anger to demand a more considered, long term and rational response from their government. In sum, Said identifies a political docility amongst 'ordinary' Americans which is exploited by the US administration in order that it may continue to 'pursue its interests systematically' and without fear of domestic opposition. If political docility is the weakness of American citizens then religious docility is what Said locates as the weakness of Muslim citizens. The firm association of religion with the reaction of 'ordinary' Muslims ensures their historically inferior position to their Western counterparts.

The question is 'does the historically linear arrangement of the outlooks of Muslims and indigenous Western people necessarily matter given that Bhabha and Said perceive both positions as flawed?'. To the extent that, the value and effectiveness of any critique will to a large degree depend on an understanding of the position being critiqued in its full complexity, it matters a great deal. More importantly, questioning Bhabha and Said's projections of Muslims as a pre-modern people imposing their outdated practices onto their 'hosts' is paramount. To accept it would be to strip Muslim identities of all social and historical legitimacy to exist in the 'modern' age.

Embedded in the 'static' and 'primitive' status that Bhabha and Said associate with Muslim identities are two further assumptions which can be marked out as separate

points of analysis for assessing the in/compatibility of Muslim identities and the principles of 'cultural hybridity' in chapter 6.

'Barbaric' nature of Islam and Muslims

The first observation implicit in the notion that Islam cannot provide a framework for its followers to respond to the challenges of the 'modern' era is the image of Muslims as being bound to 'barbaric' forms of discipline. This arises out of Bhabha and Said's choice of phraseology when characterising the actions of Muslims. For instance with respect to the '9/11' attacks Said utilises phrases such as 'unknown assailants', 'deranged militants', 'religious or moral fundamentalists' and 'fanatical tyrants'. The motive and/or strategic thinking behind their actions is referred to as 'terror attached to religious and political abstractions and reductive myths'; 'gratifying acts of horrifying retaliation'; 'primitive ideas of revolution and resistance, including a willingness to kill and be killed', and so on. Said's terminology foregrounds a sense of both physical and mental violence as the modus operandi of the 'terrorists' and it is his specific connection to religion as the fundamental source driving the strategy of the 'terrorists' that widens the relevance of his description to all followers of Islam.

Bhabha's notion of Muslim lifestyles as being unable to transcend violent modes of interaction is even more implicit and focussed on highlighting how the protestors against The Satanic Verses were unable to position Rushdie's text as an opportunity to be internally critical and instead confining themselves to protecting their right to maintain a 'pure' notion of their faith. Towards the end of his analysis Bhabha underlines the limitations of the strategic thinking of the protestors by noting their inability, unlike women's groups, to confront 'the politicized violence in the brothel and the bedroom'⁸⁹. I do not expand on this particular observation here as I return to examine it later when I discuss Bhabha's suggestion that Islam and Muslims are unable to transcend patriarchal relations (see pp59-60).

The point of analysis to be drawn from Said and Bhabha's conceptions that physical and mental violence are integral to Muslim lifestyles is whether it is Islam itself, or

⁸⁹The Location of Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994), p229

the interpretation of Islam, that is responsible for instances where Muslims support or carry out 'barbaric' acts.

Muslims as a homogenous ethnic group

Another characterisation of Muslims that arises from the perception that their identities and lifestyles are committed to preserving a 'pure' notion of their faith is that Muslims constitute a homogenous ethnic group. This is implied by both writers through their respective promotion of the secular position as overcoming the culturally enclosed condition of Muslim identities. Bhabha does this almost in passing when for instance he writes, "'secular' blasphemy releases a temporality that reveals the contingencies, even the incommensurabilities, involved in the process of social transformation"⁹⁰. The secular is therefore seen to encourage interaction across racial groups, different histories and different narratives of culture which is deemed to be absent in negotiations of *being* Muslim.

In Said's case, of the five categories of people interwoven into his analysis of '9/11' the 'secular' occupies the least space for discussion. But this does not diminish the 'critical' worth that Said accords it and which he establishes in more detail in his book The World, the Text, and the Critic⁹¹. In short, amidst the *mess* of global cultural relations that September 11th so vividly illuminated Said pinpoints the 'secular politics of reason' as the one position from which we might establish more peaceful and equal times. As in Bhabha's work, the concept of 'secular' is mobilised by Said to signify an oppositional mode of thought to essentialised conceptions of identity formation constructed around homogenous notions of 'race', nation and religion. With reference to this it is appropriate to acknowledge Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin's point that 'secular criticism' is not adopted by Said as a method 'to debunk organised religion'⁹². In as much as Said's starting point for his understanding and exploration of 'secular criticism' is the entanglement and complicity of literary criticism in circulating ideas and perceptions that have shaped modern societies and

⁹⁰ibid., p226

⁹¹Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983

⁹²The Edward Said Reader, (London, Granta, 2001), p218

experiences, then yes, Bayoumi and Rubin's observation is not incorrect. However, Said's argument, and that of others promoting the secular position, appears not to be that an individual or groups quest for 'freedom' and 'equality' cannot be fulfilled through religious devotion. But that the 'freedom' and 'equality' arrived at only holds true for the individual or group concerned.

In sum, the 'secular' argument implies that identities predicated on religious doctrine are ethnically enclosed with an entirely self-contained conception of 'freedom' or 'equality' that has little or no regard for its implications for 'other' individuals or groups. In that sense religion cannot function as an adequate mode of thought for the structure of modern relations where the biggest challenge remains one of identifying more 'utopian' *transcultural* relations. This point is specifically contextualised in my assessment of the Muslim narratives from my own case study by examining the racial composition of Muslims (see pp220-229) on the one hand, and by evaluating their interaction with the multiple cultural influences around them on the other (see pp246-273).

The subordinate status of women in Islam

The final point I want to highlight from my analysis of Bhabha and Said's commentaries about the cultural politics of Muslims relates to the notion that women occupy a subordinate status in Islam. This point is specifically drawn from Bhabha's writings.

For Bhabha an outright rejection of The Satanic Verses, authentic religious identities, Islamic fundamentalism, patriarchy and male chauvinism are all intricately linked. This becomes starkly apparent when, having dismissed the fierce anger directed towards the book as the action of religious fundamentalists fuelled by a desire to maintain a 'pure' notion of their faith, Bhabha ventures to the activities on the 'margins' to identify the more progressive possibilities of the 'Rushdie episode':

The most productive debates, and political initiatives, in the post-fatwah period, have come from women's groups like Women Against Fundamentalism and Southall Black Sisters in Britain. [...] Feminists have not

fetishized the infamous naming of the prostitutes after Mohamed's wives: rather they have drawn attention to the politicized violence in the brothel and the bedroom, raising demands for the establishment of refuges for minority women coerced into marriages.⁹³

Whilst Bhabha applauds the initiatives of women's groups as an alternative to the public denunciations against The Satanic Verses, it is never clear whether their position towards religion and more specifically Islam is radically different than those Muslims 'who took to the streets'. Is it inconceivable that any of them may have been Muslims themselves? Equally, does the 'productive' character of their chosen path of action necessarily cancel out the 'productive' possibilities of protests foregrounding other points of denunciation, such as that taken up by 'Muslims on the street'? Yet, this is something that the reader is led to assume from Bhabha's earlier equation of condemnations of The Satanic Verses as irrational, 'fundamentalist' and concerned only with winning a 'binary geopolitical' war.

By maintaining a firm distinction between the more publicised reactions of Muslims and those taking place on the 'margins', Bhabha is unable to conceive of women's rights as ever being engaged with by individuals wishing to authenticate their Islamic faith and by implication those who demonstrated against Rushdie and his novel. This is a tenuous link, in as much as it cannot be assumed that just because the protestors against the book did not foreground the issue of women's rights, whilst other groups did, they were endorsing patriarchal systems and were wholly against equal rights for women. In emphasising this point I am not proposing that Muslims and Muslim societies have not played a role in creating systems of gender inequalities. However, as the narratives explored in chapter 6 testify, the situation is far more complex than is implied by the notion that 'Islam' subordinates women.

In light of Said and Bhabha's status as key proponents of 'hybridity' theory it would be easy to interpret my examination of their comments as indicative of an incompatibility between identities foregrounded on 'Islam' and the constitution of a 'hybrid' politics. This does appear to be Said and Bhabha's own critical position.

⁹³The Location of Culture. (London, Routledge, 1994), p229

However, my focus in this chapter has been confined to assessing the validity of their respective commentaries about the cultural politics of Muslims. If, as I have suggested, that their conception of the dynamics that have drawn Muslims to unite 'in protest' is not wholly accurate, then this still leaves open the possibility of actual Muslim identities embracing the same 'democratic' principles which Said, Bhabha and others perceive as inherent to a 'hybrid' politics. Thus, at this stage it would be premature to draw any conclusions about the in/compatibility between Muslim identities and 'cultural hybridity' which is contested more rigorously in chapter 6 through an examination of the narratives of ten Muslims. Here it is appropriate to highlight that Bhabha and Said in their respective commentaries fail to engage the actual voices and opinions of Muslims. In that sense their understanding of Muslim lifestyles is constructed in the abstract context and remains removed from everyday reality. This raises a degree of vulnerability about their conclusions which can be intimated by inflecting the same empirical question that Said poses to cast doubt on the socially inferior position accorded to Muslims in Samuel Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilisations' thesis which provides the focal point of Said's contribution to *The Nation*.

The main thrust of Huntington's argument is that global politics in the 'new world' will be dominated by conflicts between people of different civilisations, most notably between Islam and the West. Huntington presents his thesis from a perspective and a confidence that Western civilisation occupies a superior status and must therefore 'fend off all the others'. Questioning Huntington's interpretation of the intuition of Muslims with regards their social status Said states, 'Huntington writes that "the worlds billion or so Muslims are 'convinced of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power'." Did he canvas 100 Indonesians, 200 Moroccans, 500 Egyptians and fifty Bosnians? Even if he did, what sort of sample is that?'⁹⁴. In the same vein, we might inquire 'on what empirical foundations does Said conceptualise a 'blind patriotism' through which Muslim populations draw reassurance from the 'terrorist's' agenda?' Of course Said's, or for that matter Bhabha's, line of interpretation is no more empirically grounded than Huntington's.

⁹⁴<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20011022&c=2&s=said> (part 2 of 'The Clash of Ignorance', in *The Nation*, October 22nd 2001 issue)

As part of the discussion in chapter 7 to establish the importance of engaging more empirically grounded enquiries into the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity', I return to Said and Bhabha's work and expose in more detail how the limitations of their conclusions about Muslim identities are a direct consequence of their failure to be more empirically thorough.

The discussion in this chapter has established more clearly the vastly different contexts afforded by the two case studies for debating contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. In doing so they foreground and confront very different aspects of the work of hybridity theorists. The discussion set around the first case study is concerned with the more readily debated features of 'cultural hybridity' including 'cultural pluralism', 'fragmented identities', 'cultural mutation' and 'a sense of doubleness'. In contrast, the second case study with its focus on religious negotiation draws out the more subtle and less debated aspects of the work of hybridity theorists including the 'desire for location', 'authenticity' and 'anti-anti-essentialism'. Before presenting the two case studies it is necessary to examine in detail the component parts of the various conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' and draw out their similarities and differences. This is the focus of chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Four Views of 'Cultural Hybridity': A Critical Review

This chapter undertakes a detailed critical review of theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. A main aim of the chapter is to break away from the popular take-up of hybridity theory which has tended to focus on its most radical elements of 'fluidity' and 'floating signifiers' creating a new moral binarism between 'old' and 'new' ethnicities⁹⁵. This has been unhelpful for the specific purpose of developing more effective anti-racist strategies in that, as Paul Gilroy comments, 'the cultural saturnalia which attends the end of the innocent black subject [...] in leaving racial essentialism behind by viewing "race" itself as a social and cultural construction, it has been insufficiently alive to the lingering power of specifically racialised forms of power and subordination'⁹⁶. In response to these shortcomings, rather than provide an overview of the work of all hybridity theorists, I limit my focus to four individuals to establish a more complex understanding of the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' including those aspects which have yet to receive serious debate.

The four writers chosen for discussion are, Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Ali Rattansi. The main criteria for selecting these individuals was to focus on the work of British academics⁹⁷. Homi Bhabha⁹⁸ is a notable exception to the list and was not included for the reason that his comments are a substantial focus for contextualising Muslim subjectivities in chapter 1. This, I felt, would have introduced an additional element impinging on the critical value of his contestations of 'cultural

⁹⁵Philip Cohen, 'Through a Glass Darkly', in New Ethnicities, Old Racisms, edited by P. Cohen (London, Zed Books, 1999), p7

⁹⁶The Black Atlantic, (London, Verso, 1993), p32

⁹⁷A number of American intellectuals have also made significant contributions to contemporary debates about 'cultural hybridity'. See for example, James Clifford, 'Traveling Cultures', in Cultural Studies, edited by L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P. Treichler, (London, Routledge, 1992), pp96-112
Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988)
bell hooks, Outlaw Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994)
Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, (London, Vintage, 1993)
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory, edited by P. Williams & L. Chrisman, (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993)

⁹⁸The Location of Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994)

hybridity' that would not have existed for the other individuals chosen for this critical review.

It is appropriate to acknowledge that the work of the four writers presented in this chapter, along with that of other hybridity theorists, has attracted considerable attention and debate over the last fifteen years or so. This, albeit recent, history of critical contestation positions the respective works with a firm critical presence within debates about 'race', cultural identity and representation. In that sense the thesis can be viewed as a contribution to an established ongoing dialogue about the value of contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' for addressing the impact of 'race' as a marker of difference.

Stuart Hall's work and in particular his notion of the 'end of the essential black subject' figure centrally in the work of the other writers under discussion. For that reason Hall's work is examined first and is seen to provide a good background to the social and historical context in which contemporary debates about 'cultural hybridity' have emerged. I then examine the work of Avtar Brah. Her contestations of 'diaspora'/'hybrid' cultural formations take the significant step of expanding the focus on 'migrant' cultural formations to address the role of indigenous Western cultures and their impact on fragmented experiences of identity and culture. The third writer chosen for discussion is Paul Gilroy. The historical amplitude of Gilroy's investigation, which examines the work of late twentieth century artists such as Soul II Soul and Toni Morrison alongside works by nineteenth century artists such as Martin Robison Delaney and the Fisk Jubilee singers, enables him to locate identity specific issues such as occupying two cultures at once, which others have described as unique to late- or post modernity, at the very inception of modernity. An analysis of Ali Rattansi's examination of the dynamics of modern cultural formations completes my critical review of theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. Rattansi's concern with identifying the possibilities for building racially transgressive relations is developed through an understanding of modern identities which brings into sharper focus the complex ways in which supposedly mutually exclusive subjectivities, such as racists and anti-racists, collide, interact and even draw alliances.

The individual sections on each writer are interspersed with references to my own empirical research sometimes to clarify how particular concepts relate, position or challenge the subject matter of each case study, and at other times to identify how specific points of analysis are used to inform my own examination of the findings. The contrasting nature of the case studies means that different aspects of the individual works carry different weight and significance across the two studies and this will become apparent as the chapter unfolds. I should emphasise that the overriding concern of the chapter is to establish the precise connections that each writer makes between 'diaspora'/'hybrid' cultures and a transgressive cultural politics. Thus, the discussion does not incorporate individual critiques of 'cultural hybridity' that have emerged in recent years⁹⁹ though appropriate references to these are made in subsequent chapters. Also, except for the purposes of aiding the flow of discussion I do not make comparisons between the writers within their respective sections. Similarities and differences between the individual works are summarised at the end of the chapter.

Stuart Hall

Hall's essay 'New Ethnicities'¹⁰⁰ is widely recognised as a 'path-breaking' text, signalling a new era in black cultural politics by asserting that the 'black subject cannot be represented without references to divisions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity'¹⁰¹. For Hall 'new ethnicities', and more specifically the experiences of migrants settled in the West, provide an exemplary position from which to identify a

⁹⁹The individual critiques focus on specific aspects of the work of hybridity theorists as opposed to providing comprehensive analyses examining the full complexity of individual conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. However, many are drawn upon within the discussion of the thesis in one of two ways i.e. (i) to help identify and evaluate the similarities across the work of hybridity theorists and (ii) to assess the usefulness of particular concepts or 'buzzwords' such as 'diaspora', 'hybridity', 'cultural translation', 'anti-essentialism' etc. See essays in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, edited by B. Hesse, (London, Zed Books, 2000), *Hybridity and its Discontents*, edited by A. Brah & A. Coombes, (London, Routledge, 2000), *New Ethnicities, Old Racisms*, edited by P. Cohen, (London, Zed Books, 1999) and *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, edited by Pnina Werbner & Tariq Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997). For a summary of the competing perspectives see chapter 10 'Cosmopolitics: Boundary, Hybridity and Identity', in David Morley's, *Home Territories*, (London, Routledge, 2000), pp225-245

¹⁰⁰in *Black Film, British Cinema*, edited by K. Mercer, (London, ICA, 1988), pp27-31

¹⁰¹David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds, *Stuart Hall*, (London, Routledge, 1996), p8
See also Kobena Mercer, 'A Sociography of Diaspora' in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie, eds, *Without Guarantees*, (London, Verso, 2000), pp233-244. Also in the same volume, Lola Young, 'How Do We Look? Unfixing the Singular Black (Female) Subject', pp416-429

cultural politics that cuts across racial boundaries. His emerging argument and in particular his commitment to 'cultural hybridity' is spread across a number of essays which are the basis for this discussion.

I begin my examination with an aspect of Hall's work that has received significantly less attention than his conceptions of 'new ethnicities' and the 'end of the essential black subject'. This aspect describes the contingent relations between identity formation and economic (re)organisation. It is important to understand this feature of Hall's work as it draws attention to the dynamics of the marketplace as centrally significant to understanding cultural identities and the process of cultural change in late modernity.

The 'global post-modern'

In his essay 'The Local and the Global'¹⁰² Hall argues that the era when coherent, homogenous constructions of social and cultural identities dominated the way in which both nations and individuals made sense of their position in the world has been undermined by the erosion of nation states and 'the new dialectics of global culture'. He suggests that we are entering a new phase of globalisation where the expansion and success of capitalist enterprises is increasingly dependent on the ability to read, respond to and exploit the inner differences and contradictions of what were once considered to be the 'great collective social identities' of class, 'race', gender, nation and so on. In the course of unpacking the entangled web of economic and cultural relations at stake here, Hall considers the changing status of a homogeneously constituted 'English' identity.

Hall describes the period when 'the image of a stiff upper lipped white middle class male' was the central component of a very narrowly defined and distinctly 'English' national cultural identity which stood for everybody in the British Isles. This image, by complementing Britain's material and economic muscle, helped secure its domination as an imperial power. But, Hall adds, the nation state as a homogeneously constituted self-contained cultural entity is not able to deliver the kind of societal

¹⁰²in *Culture, Globalisation and the World System*, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp19-39

vision that is now required to compete with the most advanced forms of modern capital. In late modernity economic success is increasingly dependent on the ability to work with and through difference. The premise on which Hall's argument is based is that in order for capital to advance it has had to develop and exploit new, more flexible strategies of accumulation which are still very much built on the logics of mass production and mass consumption, but which can also deliver a product or service that is tailor made to the specific requirements of each consumer¹⁰³. This is in stark contrast to the 'totally integrative and all-absorbent' perception of capitalism which Hall suggests is only a partial constituent of the 'logic of capital'. He states, 'alongside the drive to commodify everything, which is certainly one part of its logic, is another critical part of its logic which works in and through specificity'¹⁰⁴.

Considering the impact of the 'new' logic of capital upon the process of identity negotiation, Hall suggests that the 'cultural landscapes' (such as social class, gender, 'race' or nationality) that once provided a 'stable sense of self' have been fragmented by modern globalisation processes, creating a 'crisis of identities' or the 'global post-modern'. Thus, whereas in the past individuals were defined by one overarching axis of identification, the postmodern subject 'assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self''¹⁰⁵ but negotiated through interaction with a multitude of axes of identification.

The connection proposed by Hall between the emergence of culturally fragmented identities and the 'new' logic of capital is supported by evidence from my first case study. The data, as I describe in chapter 4, indicate a disproportionately higher use of new media services in South Asian households compared to the indigenous population. This is directly linked to the increased flexibility and choice provided by new technologies such as the VCR and cable/satellite television which afford access

¹⁰³The particular era of capitalist economy with which Hall is concerned can be more specifically identified as the shift from 'fordism to post-fordism' or 'economies of scale to economies of scope'. An exploration of these concepts is not relevant here but for a summary see Robin Murray, 'Fordism and post-Fordism', in *New Times*, edited by S. Hall & M. Jacques, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1989)

¹⁰⁴ibid., p29

¹⁰⁵'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and It's Futures*, edited by S. Hall, D. Held & T. McGrew (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p276

to culturally distinct texts (such as Indian films) often marginalised in mainstream British culture (see pp147-150). These trends are an example of how the cultural tastes and styles of migrant populations, once ridiculed by the West, begin to find expression inside Western societies as a direct result of the 'new' logic of capital in which economic growth is increasingly dependent on attending to the needs of the individual as opposed to the 'masses'.

Hall qualifies his thesis to recognise that 'the loss of a stable sense of self' has produced a variety of reactions from nations, regions, groups and individuals. Some have retreated to more aggressive forms of nationalism and/or ethnic essentialism whilst others have embraced the challenge of engaging with the multiple co-ordinates of their identities as a way of negotiating and living with difference¹⁰⁶. This observation is an appropriate point on which to make an overall connection with the empirical research presented in this thesis in that, Hall's identification of the opposing reactions to the 'loss of a stable sense of self' is precisely what I have sought to confront across the two case studies. On the one hand the identification and examination of the bicultural consumption of films captures the possibilities of *assuming different identities at different times*. The simultaneous usage of culturally distinct texts, as highlighted in my critique of Gillespie's study (see pp36-38), heightens awareness and negotiation of cultural differences thereby creating precisely the kind of conditions for the emergence of 'new ethnicities'. By contrast, the foregrounding of Islam over all other co-ordinates of identity for defining Muslim lifestyles is more representative of *maintaining a 'stable sense of self'*. In this instance, as Bhabha and Said argue, the potential for cultural change through interaction with multiple cultural influences is thwarted because one particular axis of identification is privileged as the defining source of cultural location. For Hall, and other hybridity theorists, it is only identities which openly engage multiple axes of cultural identification and do not privilege one axis over all others that are able to negotiate a cultural politics capable of redressing the unequal relations of power and

¹⁰⁶In this regard Hall remains dissatisfied with the phrase the 'global post-modern' and the ambiguous ways in which blacks are positioned within it acknowledging that, "the majority of the [world's] population have not yet properly entered the modern era, let alone the postmodern" (David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds, *Stuart Hall*, (London, Routledge, 1996), p14). However, he also concedes that the 'global post-modern' is not a term that can be easily ignored as it registers certain 'stylic shifts' in economic relations which are crucial to understanding the cultural dynamics specific to postmodernity.

opportunity. This position is contested by my own empirical findings which, as we shall see later, propose that the foregrounding of religious doctrine need not impede cross-cultural interaction just as much as the simultaneous consumption of culturally diverse texts does not guarantee racially transgressive cultural dialogues.

To understand Hall's investment in culturally fragmented identities over those predicated on one axis of identification I turn my attention to that aspect of his work concerned with profiling how identities grounded in essentialism are inimical to any movement concerned with eliminating structures supporting racial subordination and discrimination.

Identity politics one

In Britain, the formation of a collective black cultural politics achieved prominence in the sixties and seventies when the first wave of post-war migrants began to realise that they were not going 'back home'. Diverse histories and ethnic identities were submerged in favour of a singular encompassing notion of what it was like to be part of a migrant community, or family, settled in Britain.

Within the specific context of 'race' relations in Britain during the seventies Hall acknowledges 'identity politics one' as a necessary and immensely empowering moment. He writes, 'I have the feeling that, historically, nothing could have been done to intervene in the dominated field of mainstream popular culture, to try to win some space there, without the strategies through which those dimensions were condensed onto the signifier 'black''¹⁰⁷. However, the question Hall poses and which is central to his investment in 'culturally hybrid' identities, is whether an essentialist black identity 'is still a sufficient basis for the strategies of new interventions'¹⁰⁸. Hall introduces the phrase 'the end of the essential black subject' to describe the limitations of 'identity politics one' and supports his argument by highlighting the 'silencing' effects of a collective black identity.

The end of the essential black subject

¹⁰⁷ 'What is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture', in Black Popular Culture, edited by G. Dent, (Seattle, Bay Press, 1992), p29

In 'Old and New Identities'¹⁰⁹, Hall outlines three ways in which constructing an oppositional politics around a narrowly formulated notion of 'black' can be silencing. Firstly, those involved in the anti-racist struggles of the seventies prioritised a definitive and uncontradictory 'black' experience, thereby silencing all other aspects of their cultural histories and experiences. Secondly, the investment in projecting a united front meant that those migrant groups and individuals who did not feel any affinity to the 'black' experience were unable to find a voice within this movement. Thirdly, the singling out of the experience of racism and marginalisation as the sole basis for a collective black politics resulted in a reticent attitude towards relations of power and prejudice (e.g. regarding questions of class, gender and sexuality) within black communities.

Hall argues that the strategy of 'identity politics one' of simply replacing stereotypical negative black imagery with the unproblematic notion of all blacks as good, meant that the anti-racist agenda could not move beyond a struggle over the 'relations of representation'. The term 'relations of representation' is used by Hall to refer to the dynamics of power which distinguishes those individuals and groups who operate the 'machineries' of representation from those who are the 'objects' of representation. The aim of 'identity politics one' was to challenge the situation where 'blacks' were simply the objects of representation and fight for their rights to operate the machineries of representation. Hall identifies a deeper, more serious consequence emanating from a 'black' politics confined to such a struggle. He states, 'the moment the signifier 'black' is torn from its historical, cultural and political embedding and lodged in a biologically constituted racial category, we valorize, by inversion, the very ground of the racism we are trying to deconstruct'¹¹⁰. In other words, a homogenously constructed 'black' identity reinforced the equation 'their culture versus ours' which remains a central component of much racist sentiment and racial antagonism in the modern era.

¹⁰⁸ibid., p29

¹⁰⁹'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in Culture, Globalisation and the World System, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp41-68

¹¹⁰'What is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture', in Black Popular Culture, edited by G. Dent, (Seattle, Bay Press, 1992), pp29-30

In Hall's schema, to advance beyond the position of simply allowing the margins *a* voice within dominant structures of society, and to actually disrupt the regimes of modern racisms, requires a shift away from the idea of the subject as a stable fixed coherent being, to a notion of the subject as fragmented, complexly positioned by the multiple co-ordinates of identity, constantly negotiating his/her location in a never ending 'war of positions'. In making this assertion Hall acknowledges that, so long as racism and racist practices prevail within a society, its structures and social relations then the struggle in which 'identity politics one' was so firmly anchored cannot be viewed as having reached a permanent conclusion. As such the *shift* to a cultural politics which is more sensitive and responsive to the fluid character of identity (re)formation, should be seen not as a substitution for but an extension to 'identity politics one'. In Hall's words, 'the shift is best thought of in terms of a change from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself'¹¹¹.

For 'black' cultural politics, specifically, Hall asserts that the 'politics of representation' demands a deconstruction of the notion 'black'. This necessitates a reconstitution of black politics vis a vis a transformation of the meaning of the term ethnicity in which ethnicity is dismembered from its strong association with the 'sari's and samosas' style of multiculturalism that retains the configuration of *distinct* ethnic groups¹¹². The 'politics of representation' demands a renewed understanding of ethnicity, one which doesn't try to contain difference but accepts the ongoing dialogue with and within differences. This *decoupling* of ethnicity from essentialist discourses is a constant theme connecting individual conceptions of 'cultural hybridity'. The specific ways in which a non-essentialist conception of ethnicity is maintained across the two case studies has been delineated in chapter 1 (see pp21-43).

Many of the themes introduced by Hall's conception of the 'end of the essential black subject' are used as points of analysis for contesting the Muslim identities presented in the second case study. In specific response to Hall's concern about the 'silencing'

¹¹¹'New Ethnicities', in 'Race', Culture and Difference, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992), p253

¹¹²'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in Culture, Globalisation and the World System, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp55-56

effects arising from homogenous conceptions of the subject, a crucial point for assessing the Muslim narratives from my study is to examine the extent to which the foregrounding of Islam has ‘silenced’ other points of identification. Taking on board Hall’s qualification that where racism persists ‘identity politics one’ may still have a role to play, the issue of ‘silencing’ is approached as two separate concerns. Firstly, there is the issue of ‘silencing’ that might occur when Muslims unite around their common affiliation to Islam in order to fight racism or more specifically Islamophobia. And secondly, there is the ‘silencing’ that might arise out of the foregrounding of Islam in individual negotiations of *being* Muslim. By examining these concerns separately the study is able to highlight that the ‘politics of representation’ should not be theorised exclusively from the position of ‘black’ or Muslim identities, but emphasises the need to address how mainstream representations respond to more complex conceptions of ‘black’ or Muslim subjects (see pp239-241).

Hall accepts that maintaining ‘difference’ at the heart of any political objective or movement may appear impossible, a contradiction even. However, he professes that not only is such a politics possible but it is essential to the prospect of an anti-racist society. In exploring and detailing this dimension of his work Hall introduces Gramsci’s concept of *hegemony* and Derrida’s concept of *differance*.

Cultural hegemony and differance

Hall suggests that a common misunderstanding of how hegemony works is that unification is made possible through the erosion of difference. But the objective of hegemony to unite people is not reliant on making ‘everybody the same’. Rather, the emphasis is on ‘the construction of a collective will through difference’¹¹³. This is how Gramsci perceives hegemony describing it as the ‘war of position’ which from Hall’s perspective is the only political game worth playing in the modern era.

Hall highlights the strength of the ‘war of position’ by distancing it from ‘the war of manoeuvre’. The distinction between these two strategies is encapsulated in the way each engages the meaning of difference. For example, the ‘war of manoeuvre’

¹¹³ibid., p58

achieves its objectives through a conception of difference 'as a radical and unbridgeable separation'. By contrast, the 'war of position' engages with difference in a manner more akin to Derrida's notion of *differance*. Central to the concept of differance is the idea that 'meaning is never finished or completed'¹¹⁴. Hence, our attention is drawn not to fixed oppositions such as male and female, but to the numerous different positions in between. This is the difference 'which is positional, conditional and conjunctural'¹¹⁵. Hall does, however, point out that Derrida's notion requires some qualification if it is to be a useful analytical tool. He states that Derrida's notion does not lose *all* association with the more popular appropriations which represent difference in mutually exclusive terms. As Hall points out, a politics can only be maintained if there is some kind of positioning. Thus, for the 'war of position' to even enter the game of politics it is necessary to conceive and respond to difference as both positionality and movement simultaneously. 'To think only in terms of difference and not in terms of the relational position between the suturing, the arbitrary, overdetermined cut of language which says something [...] is to lose hold of the two necessary ends of the chain'¹¹⁶.

Hall's conceptions of the 'war of position' and the 'war of manoeuvre' are utilised in chapter 4 to analyse differing patterns of interaction between popular/mainstream and Indian films amongst South Asian audiences. The overall trends I discover suggest that whilst the 'war of position' is more suitable for describing the constantly shifting and interchangeable use of distinct cultural texts, inside the 'war of position' there is evidence of a 'war of manoeuvre' in that binary opposites and notions of superior/inferior cultures dominate conversations and opinions about the aesthetic qualities of the two categories of film (see pp193-195).

Through a discussion of 'the war of position', Hall intimates that the value of the strategy of hegemony is that it makes intervention in the organisation and structure of

¹¹⁴'Cultural identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by J. Rutherford, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p229

¹¹⁵'New Ethnicities', in *'Race', Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992), p257

¹¹⁶'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalisation and the World System*, edited by Anthony D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), p51

power possible without requiring individuals to declare allegiance to an undifferentiated and singularly defined identity which is dismissive of all other identities. This is the theme which features at the centre of Hall's conception of 'new ethnicities'.

Understanding 'new ethnicities' vis a vis the 'diaspora' experience

Throughout his contribution to the project of developing a progressive cultural politics Hall maintains a focus on 'black' cultural identities. This is in part due to his own background and interests, but Hall also perceives 'black' identities, and specifically the 'migrant' experience, as an advantageous position from which to delineate the emergence of 'new ethnicities' which open up possibilities for racially transgressive change in the modern era. In fact, he describes the 'migrant' as 'the prototype of the postmodern condition'¹¹⁷ and expands on this assertion by describing the 'black' experience as a 'diaspora' experience.

Like the term 'ethnicity' Hall distinguishes his use of 'diaspora' from its position in essentialist discourses of 'race' and its more specific association with a hierarchical and pure conception of a Jewish identity. He notes that 'diaspora' has been more commonly used to describe a geographically dispersed population or group of people whose identity is predicated on shared historical experiences. In such a conception, membership of a cultural group is pre-determined by ancestral origins and fixed at birth. Hall asserts that this is a pure conception of identity and fails to provide a comprehensive picture. For Hall it is impossible to speak with any 'exactness' about a common or shared cultural identity 'grounded in a mere recovery of the past'¹¹⁸. The central tenet of Hall's argument is that migration, whether it be voluntary or enforced, is a concomitant part of the 'diaspora condition'. The 'migrant' subject is not only transplanted into another part of the world, s/he has to contend with living amongst other cultures. Thus, individuals with a migratory background are by implication 'nomads' with a fractured sense of belonging.

¹¹⁷'Cultural identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by J. Rutherford, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p234

¹¹⁸ibid., p225

By highlighting the transient and unstable features integral to the 'migrant' experience Hall presses for a revised notion of 'diaspora'. He argues that the 'predisposition to travel' and movement inherent in the migratory process raises questions as to the feasibility of defining 'diaspora' cultures in homogenous terms, of imagining 'diaspora' origins as rooted in one fixed location. The predicament of not belonging to any one particular place suggests a plurality of cultural sources which imply that the 'migrant's' identity and sense of belonging is as much influenced by new and impermanent cultural associations as it is by inherited ones. This set of circumstances, Hall argues, should not be interpreted as an irreconcilable conflict of mutually exclusive cultural codes and practices. Rather the 'migrant's' cultural predicament is better understood as a 'process of hybridisation'.

The fundamental link identified by Hall between the experience of migration and the 'diaspora condition' is not wholly consistent with the sample profile of my two case studies. The vast majority of respondents for both studies, like the majority of South Asians in Britain, were born in this country and have no direct experience of 'dispersion' and '(re)settlement'. And this is representative of the generation of black Britons who are the predominant focus for hybridity theorists' delineation of a 'new' cultural politics of difference. This section of the black British population does not share the 'migrant's' 'predisposition to travel'. This discrepancy does not of course undermine the fact that despite being born here second and third generation black Britons are still overwhelmingly treated as 'outsiders' by the 'host' nation and their experiences will be significantly defined by this connection. At the same time, the discrepancy is highlighted here because the generational differences emerging from the two case studies emphasise that the concept of 'migrant' has a very different and shifting significance in the negotiation of 'multiple cultural influences' amongst those who have experienced migration first hand compared to those who were born to migrants. In the first case study this difference manifests itself in that the simultaneous consumption of culturally distinct texts is much more common amongst second and third generation South Asians born in Britain than first generation migrants. In the second case study it is the second and third generation of Muslims born in Britain that are identified as foregrounding one axis of identification over all others. The implications of these complex findings for theorising the 'migrant'

experience in understanding 'cultural hybridity' are addressed in the course of presenting the empirical findings (see chapters 4, 6 and conclusion).

In Hall's framework the 'signifier of migration' provides a different way of thinking about cultural identity and is explored to establish a 'diaspora aesthetic' which is characterised by a 'necessary heterogeneity'. For Hall the negotiation of multiple cultural influences makes racially transgressive change possible precisely because it symbolises a position of 'cultural hybridity' from 'where the unthinkable might come to pass - it might be possible to be Black-and-British or Asian-and-British (or even British-and-gay)',¹¹⁹.

Avtar Brah

The second writer I have selected for discussion, because of her contribution to understanding modern identities through an exploration of complex intersections of multiple co-ordinates of identity, is Avtar Brah. Her investigation of modern social and cultural formations is presented in her book Cartographies of Diaspora. Whilst Brah, like other hybridity theorists, identifies the refusal to privilege a singular axis of identification above all others as the centrally transgressive feature of 'cultural hybridity', she resists the idea that the 'singular axis' is replaced by an in-between space or an indiscriminate position from where solutions to unequal relations of power and subordination readily emerge. From this position it can be argued that Brah is very cautious and particular in her location of the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity'. This is evident in her comment that 'while Hall's emphasis on de-coupling ethnicity from essentialist discourses of 'race', 'nation' or 'culture' is vital, the process of doing so is replete with enormous contradictions'¹²⁰. Before discussing Brah's response to the issues concerned it is appropriate to point out that the structure and content of this thesis bears a significant similarity to Brah's examination in that the experiences of South Asians in Britain are positioned centrally in both investigations.

¹¹⁹'The Multi-Cultural Question', in Un/Settled Multiculturalisms, edited by B. Hesse, (London, Zed Books, 2000), pp237-238

¹²⁰ibid., p242

In Brah's book four of the nine chapters are devoted to examining South Asian identities in post-war Britain. Two of these chapters are based on empirical studies conducted during the 1980s and examine un/employment patterns amongst South Asian youth and Muslim women respectively. In this thesis too two empirical investigations into South Asian cultures are the basis for critical analysis and insight into modern cultural dynamics. In Brah's work, however, whilst the empirical studies provide a background to her overall understanding of contemporary 'diaspora' cultures there is little direct dialogue between her empirical research and her theoretical exposition of 'diaspora' formations in that the two are presented in separate chapters and so there is no direct cross-referencing between them. The approach of this thesis is to undertake a direct analysis between theoretical insight and empirical evidence. I draw on abstract conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' to describe and make sense of the significance of people's everyday realities and what they relay about contemporary dynamics of 'race' and culture, and I draw on people's everyday realities to contest and where appropriate propose revisions to theoretical explorations of 'cultural hybridity'.

The starting point for my examination of Brah's work is her conception of 'difference' which she establishes as a key organising theme for her investigation.

Difference - replacing 'politics of primacy' with 'politics of intersectionality'

Brah emphasises that understanding and tracking how 'difference' is situated in 'diaspora' cultural formations is paramount because all our fates are linked within a global economic system where 'our precise position depends on a multiplicity of factors, such as gender, class, colour, ethnicity, caste' and so on¹²¹. She additionally argues that in order for a 'diaspora' politics to disrupt processes of discrimination and shift the balance of power it is necessary to formulate a notion of 'difference' that is able to maintain a 'sense of solidarity' without homogenising individual experiences. To provide a basis for her argument she distinguishes when 'difference' is organised hierarchically from when it is organised laterally.

¹²¹ibid., p84

Briefly, a hierarchical organisation of 'difference' exists 'where 'difference' becomes the vehicle for the legitimation of dominance'¹²². Examples of this would be racist and chauvinistic practices where categories of 'race' and 'sex' are ordered to create and reinforce inequalities. By comparison, a lateral conception of 'difference' functions to challenge and resist exploitation or oppression. In this instance individuals may unite behind a shared characteristic or symbol of 'cultural difference' in order to improve their subordinate position.

Brah argues that despite its potential to 'constitute a progressive force', a lateral assertion of difference is not unproblematic. It too runs into difficulty when it signifies a 'politics constituted around the assertion of the 'primacy' of one axis of differentiation over all others as *the* motor force of history'¹²³. A 'politics of primacy' does not disrupt 'processes' of discrimination because its strategic objective is to improve the rights of specific sections of the population, placing them on a more equal footing with the more 'privileged' members in society. Brah suggests that, an effective challenge to the actual systems which create inequalities requires a somewhat different politics which she terms a 'politics of intersectionality'. Alongside an appreciation of what distinguishes particular forms of oppression there needs to be a commitment to understanding and responding to their interconnections. One of the examples through which Brah underscores this last point is by highlighting how 'racism is always a gendered and sexualised phenomenon'. She notes how colonial discourse constructed Bengali males as 'feminine' to establish their inferior status in relation to the 'macho British male'. In a similar vein 'masculine' traits were attributed to black female slaves positioning them as the uncivilised opposite of 'white womanhood'. These interconnections make it impossible to tackle racism effectively without engaging and challenging gender and sexual constructions.

From these observations Brah emphasises that the fragmented nature of identities means that individual experiences cannot be homogenised, yet on the other hand it is necessary to be able to draw on points of solidarity in order to mount a collective struggle against oppressive or discriminatory practices. To balance these points Brah

¹²²ibid., p90

¹²³ibid., p14

suggests that ‘difference’ be conceptualised in four ways. Very briefly these can be summarised as, (i) ‘difference as experience’ which recognises subject formation as always in process and unique to the individual; (ii) ‘difference as social relation’ which involves the interweaving of narratives through shared material and social circumstances which ‘*produce the conditions* for the construction of group identities’¹²⁴; (iii) ‘difference as subjectivity’ which acknowledges the play of the unconscious and its significance in drawing individuals to confront contradictions and question the ‘rational’ social constructions that pervade modern societies; and (iv) ‘difference as identity’ which refers to how stability and coherence is established to give meaning to an individual’s ‘sense of self’ indicating his/her location at a given moment with respect to a specific axis of differentiation. This multi-dimensional conception of ‘difference’ proposes that ‘it is a contextually contingent question whether difference pans out as inequity, exploitation and oppression *or* as egalitarianism, diversity and democratic forms of political agency’¹²⁵.

A separate part of Brah’s discussion, in which she examines changing constructions of ‘the Asian’ in post-war Britain, can be used here to underscore the importance she accords to ‘contextually contingent’ assessments of the impact that essentialist and non-essentialist conceptions of ‘difference’ may have in given circumstances. Challenging popular representations of inter-generational differences amongst Asians as a conflict between ‘tradition and modernity’ Brah makes a distinction between ‘age-group’ and ‘generation’. She explains that ‘age-group’ imposes a vertical arrangement of inter-generational differences in which a direct comparison of differences in opinion and behaviour between parents/elders and children/adolescents is made at a particular moment in time. In such a framework of analysis generational differences are easily presented in oppositional terms as one set of cultural trends (usually the most recent) become the marker for measuring each generation’s un/willingness to embrace change. By comparison, ‘generation’ prefers a horizontal arrangement of generational differences which positions and examines inter-generational differences within the social and historical context peculiar to each age group. Here, judgements about generational differences in cultural attitudes and

¹²⁴ibid., p118

¹²⁵ibid., p126

lifestyles are made on the basis of the particular challenges and experiences shaping the outlook and choices made by each group.

Brah's distinction between 'age-group' and 'generation' is deployed in my first case study to resist the 'homogeneity versus diversity' dichotomy in interpreting generational differences in the consumption of films on videotape. The trends are analysed in the social and historically specific contexts specific to each age group such that the 'monocultural' film culture of older generations is not positioned as the 'static' opposite of the more 'fluid' 'bicultural' film culture of the younger respondents. For instance, by identifying the emergence of an Indian film culture in Britain as a direct result of post-war Asian migration notions of cultural power and racially transgressive cultural change are linked to the 'monocultural' patterns of film consumption of first generation migrants (see pp163-165). These observations are noted as inviting a more critical assessment of the emphasis on 'cultural pluralism' or 'cross-cultural location' and the progressive capacity of 'cultural hybridity'.

For Brah the central challenge that a multi-dimensional conception of 'difference' poses for the 'politics of intersectionality' is that of developing a strategy through which it is possible 'to foster solidarity without erasing difference'. In identifying how this might be realised Brah turns her attention to the discourse of 'universalism'.

Recasting 'universalism' to challenge 'commonalty of conditions'

Whilst acknowledging 'the complicity of the discourse of 'universalism' with hegemonic projects of imperialism'¹²⁶, Brah argues that redefining universalism as 'a situated and historically variable commonalty' makes it possible to work 'with' and 'across' differences. Here 'universalism' is not counterpoised against 'historical specificity' but is seen to function in tandem with it. The result is an appreciation of the 'universal' within the 'particular' and vice-versa. Brah expands upon these initial thoughts about co-ordinating a collective struggle against the 'commonalty of conditions' in the context of what she calls 're-figuring the multi'.

¹²⁶ibid., p92

The notion of 'multi' is introduced to inject into the concept of 'universalism' the idea of non-fixity of meaning. To clarify the point Brah draws on Derrida's notion of difference in which 'meaning is subject to the 'infinite' and 'limitless' play of differences, and hence is perennially deferred'¹²⁷. But, the idea that 'meanings remain in process' should not be interpreted as 'a permanent dissolution of meaning'. For Brah it is important to distinguish between *process* and *signification* of meaning production. The former refers to how all meanings are constructions which are open to contestation, clarification and revision. By contrast, the *specific operations of signification* involve the production of 'signs as if they embodied fixed meanings'. These meanings are of course contingent and relational, in that they are specific to a given moment and situation, but they are in effect what makes conversation and debate possible, what Brah calls the paradigm of *articulation*. In summary, the re-casting of 'universalism' through the 'multi' demands that amidst all the fragmentation and 'indefinite play' we assess what precisely is being articulated by modern cultural formations and modern subjectivities.

Brah centralises the themes discussed thus far and in particular the implications that the 'play of difference' poses for the 'paradigm of articulation', in order to assess the usefulness of the concept of 'diaspora' for understanding latter day social and cultural formations. In conducting this analysis Brah feels it imperative to distinguish between 'diaspora' as a 'theoretical concept' and the 'distinct historical experiences' of 'diaspora'. In support of her position she notes how since its initial association with the dispersion of Jews, the concept of 'diaspora' has been applied to social formations which have undergone significant transformations. Thus she comments, 'late twentieth century diasporas take ancient diasporas as a point of departure rather than as 'models''. In accommodating this point Brah organises her own discussion around 'specific features which may serve to distinguish diaspora as a theoretical concept from the historical 'experiences' of diaspora'¹²⁸. These features which include 'diaspora space', the 'subtext of home' and the 'politics of location', are used to organise the rest of this section.

¹²⁷ibid., p245

¹²⁸ibid., p179

Diasporas as 'composite formations'

Brah notes that whilst the 'image of a journey' has been central to conceptions of 'diaspora', not every journey, such as those constituting casual travel or temporary sojourns, is understood as 'diaspora'. She adds that diasporic formations have emerged out of circumstances as diverse as colonisation, indentured labour, persecution and global flows of labour. Another significant feature of many diasporas is that individuals are often settled in various different parts of the globe. Each one of these journeys will have its own history and peculiar circumstances. In this regard diasporas could be described simply as a 'cluster of migrations'. But, Brah asserts, it is more appropriate to think of diasporas as 'composite formations' in that what in fact is being signified by the 'diaspora' concept is the specificities linking 'the various components of the cluster'. These specificities may be economic, political or cultural and they have an adjoining effect in that they interweave the many disparate narratives so that they configure into one journey culminating in the construction of a common 'we'.

Brah elaborates that constructions of the 'we' are often circumscribed by the image of 'a single dominant Other' which has tended to engender and highlight bipolar oppositions such as black/white; male/female; Arab/Jew etc. The foregrounding of such binaries is complex and problematic in that they are constructions and not trans-historical universalisms. And we do not need reminding of the centrality of binary opposites within racist and other oppressive discourses. However, Brah asserts, binaries acquire coherence and significance in 'historically specific, socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances'. As such 'they might be addressed fruitfully and productively as an object of analysis and a tool of deconstruction'¹²⁹. What Brah appears to be saying is that the construction of a binary essentially involves processes of signification and representation. By investigating how and in what circumstances a binary is 'constituted, regulated, embodied and contested' it is possible to deconstruct the dynamics of power and the structure of social relations in specific historical contexts.

¹²⁹ibid., p184

This identification of the role of binary opposites in the constitution of diasporas as 'composite formations' is useful in clarifying the value and contribution of my first case study to understanding the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. This is important because the juxtaposition of Indian and popular/mainstream films might be perceived as essentialising the culturally fragmented character of South Asian identities in Britain into two opposing camps. As I acknowledge in chapter 4, the first case study examines individual responses to cultural texts produced by other people which is different to the central theme running across conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' of how elements of distinct cultural forms are extracted and fused to create 'new' ones. However, locating binary opposites as Brah does in the constitution of a collective 'we' suggests that individual experiences of 'diaspora' are not constrained by binaries but are informed by them. In that sense the first case study confronts the kind of encounter of binary opposites that occurs and informs real experiences of 'diaspora' and negotiations of 'cultural hybridity'.

The manifestation of binaries in actual negotiations of 'cultural hybridity' is illustrated more clearly in the first case study when I consider the tendency among respondents to compare and arrange both the aesthetic and audio-visual qualities of popular/mainstream and Indian films along a superior/inferior continuum. The data suggests that whilst respondents enjoyed the respective texts for very different reasons there was a tendency to privilege the strengths of popular/mainstream films for assessing the aesthetic and production qualities of both categories of film. This tendency is identified as mirroring the flow of ideas between Hollywood and Indian production companies and the changes arising as a result. In sum, the efficiency and production values of Hollywood are being used to identify and introduce changes to the Indian film industry such that the cultures of production and consumption of the latter are becoming increasingly like the cultures of production and consumption of popular/mainstream films (see pp175-186). These findings emerging from the first case study are quite crucial in assessing the racially transgressive qualities of 'cultural hybridity'. They highlight, as I outline in more detail in chapter 4, that the willingness and ability to interact with distinct cultural forms does not necessarily diminish the significance of binaries and established hierarchies of cultures in how individuals perceive and respond to those cultural forms.

For Brah the precise constitution of binaries and how they are negotiated is historically variable and significantly influenced by the *configurations of power* the dynamics of which are explored and clarified through the notion of 'diaspora space' at the end of this section. First I outline the other main features of 'diaspora' examined by Brah.

The subtext of home

Migration, travel and dispersion are well established focal points in contemporary debates of diaspora. Brah adds an important qualification to this by asserting that 'diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere''¹³⁰. She acknowledges that the 'experience of social exclusion' often prevents individuals from 'proclaiming' the country of settlement as their 'home'. Also the dispersed make-up of diasporas means that 'home' is often imagined and associated with more than one location, what Brah describes as 'the double, triple or multi-placedness of 'home''. But for most people the place in which they live is a place of long-term if not permanent settlement. As such there is a degree of investment and sense of being anchored in one particular place which might be interpreted as 'the homing of diaspora'.

Brah explains that this 'homing of diaspora' or 'homing desire' should not be confused with the desire for a 'homeland'. The latter is linked to the concept of fixed origins. By comparison the inscription of 'home' within diaspora formations is such that 'home' and 'dispersion' are in creative tension. By positioning them as variable features of the diaspora condition, Brah's framework demands that both 'settlement' and 'dispersion' are critically engaged in their specific contexts rather than simply noted as distinctive, almost taken for granted, characteristics of diaspora experiences. The significance of this point for this thesis is underscored by the observation noted in the previous section that the vast majority of the respondents to my two case studies were born in Britain (see p75). Brah's insertion of the 'subtext of home' is more responsive and able to accommodate the varying experiences of dispersion and settlement which have a different resonance in the lives of second and third

generation 'black' Britons than for many older members of their families who have experienced dispersion and migration at first hand.

Transnational identifications and the 'politics of location'

The combined local and global status of diaspora formations makes them 'networks of transnational identifications'. This 'transnational' condition rightly associates diasporas with the crossing of borders. But, for Brah, the crossing of borders does not necessarily mean a transgressing of borders beyond the physical sense. In constructing her argument she points out that the 'territory' that geographical borders demarcate is reinforced and 'policed' through social, cultural and psychic boundaries. Those constructed as aliens, or 'others', may be excluded from a 'territory' in the physical sense (i.e. by denying them entry to a country or region), as well as a social sense (i.e. by identifying their group or cultural practice as belonging to another place). For Brah 'border crossings' are most definitely a feature of diasporic identities, but, they do not afford a common or privileged standpoint. They generate contradictions which need negotiation and Brah expounds this theme through the concept of 'politics of location'.

Informed by feminist debates Brah defines the 'politics of location' as *a position of multi-axial locationality*. She clarifies that multi-axial locationality does not 'pre-determine' subject positions it merely signals the 'multiple semiotic spaces' that border crossings generate. How these spaces are engaged and negotiated is 'essentially a question of politics'. To illustrate the 'political' ramifications of border crossings Brah makes reference to the 'paradox' of the migrant worker. She describes how the incongruous reception experienced by many migrant workers, (i.e. of being invited to contribute to the labour market and simultaneously reviled for doing so), captures how the same geographical space can embody such contraposed circumstances that 'home' can become a 'place of both safety and terror'. Brah's central point in incorporating the 'politics of location' is to assert that 'the probability of certain forms of consciousness emerging are subject to the play of political power and psychic investments in the maintenance or erosion of the status quo'¹³¹. In the

¹³⁰ibid., p182

¹³¹ibid., p208

case of the migrant worker, precise location, or positionality, may involve matters such as weighing up whether the opportunity of earning a living is worth risking to protest against racism.

On an analytical level the 'politics of location' is situated to ensure that the experience of *location* is not lost in an abyss of infinite migrations. It also crucially resists any conception of 'diaspora' formations representing 'free floating' and unproblematic archetypes of 'transcultural fusion'. If there are no guaranteed subjectivities emerging out of diasporic processes then we must ask to what extent a 'diaspora' politics can be usefully mobilised to identify and challenge 'commonalty of conditions'. This is the central concern directing the investigation of this thesis. In that sense the content of the thesis can be described as being more weighted towards the issue of 'location' than 'transcultural identification'. More specifically the 'politics of location' is a vividly recurring theme in the Muslim narratives presented in chapter 6. Many of the individuals openly express that pivotal to their decision to authenticate their religious identities was a desire to restore stability and certainty amidst the fragmentation and chaos arising out of being simultaneously influenced by more than one culture. At the same time their respective negotiations of religious doctrine have not reduced the diversity of Muslim subjectivities. These observations are seen to indicate an inversion of Brah's emphasis that 'location is not lost in an abyss of infinite migrations' and demand that 'fragmented and conflicting subjectivities are not overlooked in the midst of an overwhelming desire for location' (see pp263-267).

Brah's own investment in the concept of 'diaspora' lies in its substantive potential for generating relationships of 'solidarity without erasing difference', the implication being that by understanding the process of diaspora in its full complexity we might exploit its potential for the constitution of a 'politics of intersectionality'. Brah's contribution to this is the development of a new concept, that of 'diaspora space'.

Diaspora space

In Brah's words, 'diaspora space, as distinct from diaspora, foregrounds [...] the 'entanglement of the genealogies of dispersal' with those of 'staying put'¹³². By

implication, this *entanglement*, simultaneously situates and decentres the position of both migrant and indigene subjects within the same space. Their respective experiences, cultural codes and modes of living become enmeshed leading to 'myriad processes of cultural fissure and fusion'. Brah perceives 'diaspora space' as a site where 'the native becomes a diasporian as much as the diasporian becomes a native'. She clarifies, however, that this should not be interpreted as a situation where migrants and natives become equals or assume positions of 'undifferentiated relativism'. With respect to this Brah identifies the operation of a 'multi-axial performative notion of power' within 'diaspora space' where power is never subject to erosion but is the very means by which the similarities and differences between and within groups become defined. This raises an interesting point for the theorisation of power in delineating a transgressive cultural politics. For it suggests that power should not be contextualised in wholly negative terms because 'acts of resistance' just as much as 'acts of subordination' engage and exercise power to achieve their end goal in that each wants to pass its own interpretation or particular meaning as more substantive, more of a 'truth' than the other. Thus, diaspora space, through its multi-axial notion of power, problematises the interaction between groups and individuals as an endless process of 'relational positioning'.

Some interesting patterns of relational positioning emerge in the empirical research presented in chapters 4 and 6. In my first case study, where relational positioning is vividly and constantly shifting through the interaction with distinct cultural forms, the potential for disrupting the power of Western discourses is less forthcoming in that the hierarchical arrangement of popular/mainstream and Indian films is left intact (see pp191-195). By comparison, in the second case study, where relational positioning is more implicit in that it is located inside the negotiation of one particular axis of identification, i.e. Islam, evidence of contesting not just dominant Western discourses but also established notions of Islam is more apparent. The Muslim respondents re-read the teachings of Islam to challenge, for example, the use of corporal punishment in mosques as well as dominant Western conceptions of the veil as a form of female oppression (see pp251-253 and pp267-273).

¹³²ibid., p242

Brah concludes that ‘diasporas ought not to be theorised as transhistorical codifications of eternal migrations’ but ‘should be seen to refer to historically contingent ‘genealogies’, in the Foucauldian sense of the word’¹³³. Significantly, Brah’s theorisation of the intertwining of genealogies through the concept of ‘diaspora space’ begins to expand the focus of analysis to incorporate and problematise Western discourses and the position of ‘the native’. This formulation constitutes a vitally important intervention in that the position of indigenous Western subjects and their particular response(s) to the dynamics of ‘cultural hybridity’ remains undertheorised across the work of hybridity theorists. Yet, if ‘cultural hybridity’ is to provide a basis for challenging unequal relations of power then the involvement and support of indigenous Western people will be crucial to the success of that project.

Brah’s incorporation of indigenous Western discourses and identities within her conception of ‘diaspora space’ can be distinguished as two separate concerns. The first involves examining how ‘migrant’ subjectivities confront, contest or confirm Western discourses and identities. The second is about identifying how indigenous Western subjects might themselves begin to confront and question their own identities in relation to ‘others’. The focus in this thesis on South Asian cultural identities means that the first of these concerns is more integral to the main body of discussion, though aspects of the second concern are addressed and given prominence in the conclusion through the concept of the ‘giraffe’s perspective’ (see pp309-311).

Paul Gilroy

The third commentator whose work I have chosen to discuss, on account of its contribution to contemporary debates about ‘cultural hybridity’, is Paul Gilroy. His overall project and concern with displacing ‘‘race’ as a device for categorising and subordinating human beings’¹³⁴ is spread across a variety of texts. But it is in his book The Black Atlantic that he devotes his attention to the cultural experiences and expressions of blacks settled in the West as a position from which to delineate an anti-racist politics. The ideas presented in The Black Atlantic are the focus for discussion in this section although references are also made to Gilroy’s other works.

¹³³ibid., p196

The uniqueness of Gilroy's contribution is that in the course of examining the potential of 'cultural hybridity' for challenging racism his work emphasises that the overriding concern should not be with exposing its ability to transgress racial boundaries, but with its ability to challenge those principles of modernity that allow racism and inequalities to go unchallenged. A critique of modernity is thus intrinsic to his discussion and he positions the modern principles of 'rationality' and 'progress' as central points for contesting the racially transgressive capacities of modern identities. In the course of examining Gilroy's contribution I identify how specific aspects of his work inform the framework and argument of this thesis.

Two varieties of essentialism

Gilroy welcomes the visible presence of more complex and differentiated black cultures in Britain and elsewhere, but does not feel that this has resulted in a progressive black politics in the public sphere. The development of such a politics is held back by the fact that the few spaces for political mobilisation have been monopolised by 'the seemingly insoluble conflict between two distinct but currently symbiotic perspectives'¹³⁵ which Gilroy describes as 'two different varieties of essentialism'.

The first is an ontological essentialism which functions within the framework of 'ethnic absolutism' asserting that the subordinate position of blacks can only be redressed through the recovery of a homogenous black identity whose origins and ancestral home will always be Africa. This perspective, therefore, has a strong tendency 'to formalise and codify elements of cultural heritage'¹³⁶. By comparison the pluralist standpoint is characterised by a strategic essentialism¹³⁷. This perspective is decidedly committed to delineating a more complex notion of the black subject which is sensitive to the interplay of 'race' with other axes of identification such as class,

¹³⁴*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, (London, Routledge, 1987), p218

¹³⁵*The Black Atlantic*, (London, Verso, 1993), p31

¹³⁶*ibid.*, p33

¹³⁷This should not be confused with Gayatri Spivak's conception of 'strategic essentialism' which specifically refers to forms of collective resistance against oppressive circumstances. See her *In Other Worlds*, (London, Methuen, 1987)

gender, age and sexuality. There is no desire to create an all-encompassing conception of the black community. Rather, all efforts are focussed on affirming 'blackness as an open signifier'.

Gilroy suggests that neither the ontological nor strategic essentialists provide an adequate framework for grasping the 'reality' of black experiences and the persisting nature of modern racisms. He criticises the ontologically inclined essentialists for their comprehension of racial politics as manifestly consistent with the perspective of 'the racist right -who approach the complex dynamics of race, nationality and ethnicity through a similar set of pseudo-precise, culturalist equations'¹³⁸. In contrast, the weakness of the strategic essentialists is that, by directing all their energy into deconstructing the black subject, they have become powerless to confront and challenge racisms. Responding to the limitations of the two dominant perspectives, Gilroy advocates an anti-anti-essentialist position which recognises instances of unity and solidarity arising out of common experiences and struggles without reducing the individuals involved to a homogenous identity. The notion of anti-anti-essentialism is used in my analysis of the data from my second case study to distinguish between the political objectives relating to Muslim solidarity forged in response to Islamophobia and the assertion of a homogenous or 'fundamentalist' Muslim identity (see pp234-238).

In explaining his advocacy of an anti-anti-essentialist position Gilroy argues that the conflict in perspectives between the ontological and strategic essentialists is representative of the tensions created by and peculiar to the present era we recognise as modernity. He adds that to overcome the inherent weaknesses of the two perspectives it is necessary to understand the dynamics of modernity and its impact on the predicament of the oppressed.

Modernity and modern subjects

Gilroy acknowledges how the trend towards a 'fusion of cultures' is identified and examined by postmodernists such as Habermas and Berman as an outcome of the dynamics peculiar to modernity. He quotes Berman, 'modern environments and

experiences cut across *all* boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind'¹³⁹. Whilst Gilroy shares Berman's suggestion that modern identities have a distinctly fragmented and cross-cultural element not experienced by pre-modern populations, he is resistant to the assumption that 'modernity can be said to unite all mankind'. Such a conclusion can only be drawn from an all-encompassing and innocent view of modernity - all-encompassing in that 'all mankind' is affected in the same way, and innocent in that there is a singular positive 'unifying' outcome.

Gilroy argues that a fundamental and regrettable weakness in postmodernist theory is that it projects a holistic conception of modernity which is combined with an unwavering faith in the enlightenment project. He notes that whilst postmodernists have not denied the persistence of unequal relations of power and subordination in modern societies, racism's inconsistencies with the values of democracy and freedom are regarded as 'pre-modern residues' yet to be apprehended and overpowered by modernity's enlightenment project. In challenging this perspective Gilroy draws on the work of Hegel to establish the etymology of modernity as being located in the 'dialectic between master and slave'.

For Hegel, 'slavery is itself a modernising force in that it leads both master and servant first to self consciousness and then to disillusion, forcing both to confront the unhappy realisation that the true, the good, and the beautiful do not have a single shared origin'¹⁴⁰. The significance of Hegel's observation is that it highlights how the encounter of individuals defined by two distinct ideological systems leads to the 'loss of a stable sense of self'. In sum, the structural relations defining the encounter between master and slave draws both sides to become acutely conscious that their respective positions are circumscribed by opposing ideological frameworks, i.e. the slave's predicament is defined by the image of the primitive, uncivilised African and the master's position is based on the rational, progressive thinking European. Using Hegel's insight Gilroy emphasises that the loss of a 'stable sense of self' creates a *fractious* state of mind which is peculiar to modern subjectivities and is first and

¹³⁸*The Black Atlantic*. (London, Verso, 1993), p34

¹³⁹*ibid.*, p46

foremost confronted by the slave. To support this assertion he draws on the work of a number of academic and literary figures including Frederick Douglass, Martin Robison Delaney, Sherley Anne Williams, C.L.R. James and Toni Morrison. One example, Toni Morrison's novel Beloved, is selected here to illustrate Gilroy's emerging argument.

The storyline in Beloved is based on a real incident involving a female slave and her act of infanticide. The narrative presents the encounter between two opposite but interdependent constructions of the uncivilised savage (Margaret Garner) and the enlightened master (Archibald K. Gaines) at its most intense. In short, Garner attempts to free herself and her four children from bondage by absconding to the house of her mother-in-law who is a free slave. Their freedom is threatened when Gaines arrives at the house intent on taking them back to the plantation. On sighting Gaines and his team of slave catchers approaching, Garner flees to the shed with all four of her children and begins to slay them with a knife. She succeeds in killing her daughter (Beloved) whilst her two sons and baby girl survive. The narrative's pre-occupation with Garner's infliction of extreme violence on her own children functions precisely to highlight the *fractious* impact that can result from a confrontation between such mutually opposed constructions as 'slave' and 'master'. Garner's determination to save her children from the brutal and de-humanising experience of slavery culminates in finding freedom in the state of death.

For both Gilroy and Morrison, Garner's actions and slave suicide in general, reveal much about 'the cultural contours of distinctly modern experience'¹⁴¹. This is encapsulated in the following comments made by Morrison during a conversation with Gilroy¹⁴²:

Modern life begins with slavery [...], black women had to deal with post-modern problems in the nineteenth century and earlier. These things had to be addressed by black people a long time ago: certain kinds of dissolution, the

¹⁴⁰ibid., p50

¹⁴¹ibid., p222

¹⁴²For a more comprehensive account of this meeting see 'Living Memory: A Meeting with Toni Morrison', in P. Gilroy, Small Acts, (London, Serpents Tail, 1993), pp175-182

loss of and the need to reconstruct certain kinds of stability. Certain kinds of madness, deliberately going mad in order, as one of the characters says in the book, “in order not to lose your mind.” These strategies for survival made the truly modern person.¹⁴³

For the purposes of my own research Gilroy’s identification of the origins of modernity and modern subjectivities in the encounter between two opposing ideological systems can be referenced to establish more precisely the relevance of the second case study for advancing our understanding of modern cultural formations. Rather than dismissing the (re)emergence of Muslim identities in Britain (as Said and Bhabha do) as an instance of a pre-modern mode of being and seeing in a modern environment, Gilroy’s framework can be used to argue that as distinct ideological systems the encounter between ‘Muslim’ and ‘British’ cultures is in fact a wholly modern encounter. In that sense examining how Muslim identities are negotiated in a distinctly Western setting can be seen to provide a very relevant insight into the dynamics of modern relations.

Having established the origins of modernity in the experience of slavery, Gilroy joins Douglass and Dubois in insisting that the practice of racial terror and subordination need to be examined as constituent parts of the inner character of modernity. For Gilroy, the persistence of racism is further evidence that it may be necessary to look beyond the enlightenment project and the modern subject in the quest for equality and freedom for all. He develops this line of argument further by, firstly, linking the concepts of rationality and modern civilisation to the practice of racial terror, and secondly, by identifying the weaknesses and contradictions intertwined in modern black cultural politics and individual efforts to overcome racial inequalities. Delineating the first of these two points requires a return to Gilroy’s analysis of the encounter between master and slave, also referred to as Hegel’s allegory.

The character and limits of modern ‘rationality’ and ‘progress’

Gilroy draws attention to the ruinous aspect of the concept of rationality by exposing how the use of racial terror by European masters and mistresses was strategic and

calculated to establish and maintain a system of domination. It is the centrality of racial terror within the rationale for 'civilising' the savage that makes 'occidental rationality and its objective, global civilisation, not merely compatible but cheerfully complicit with the histories of barbarity'¹⁴⁴. In addition, the slaves' response to his/her brute conditions further accentuates the cogency of violence in modern relations and modern experience, a point which Gilroy elucidates through a critical discussion of Hegel's allegory.

Whilst he applauds Hegel for maintaining the dialectic of master and slave at the 'natal core of modern sociality' Gilroy suggests that Hegel's interpretation of the psychological riposte of the two respective parties remains too narrow. In Hegel's explication of the confrontation between master and slave, the slave accepts his/her master's version of reality over the only option that would guarantee freedom from bondage, i.e. death. The slave submits and a 'metanarrative of power' is retained. Gilroy suggests that in fact an inversion of Hegel's allegory is required when making sense of the reaction of slaves, such as Margaret Garner and Frederick Douglass, who actively chose death over continued bondage. They were able to exercise human agency by taking away, and placing under their own jurisdiction, the one edict (i.e. the threat of death) on which the master had relied to ensure his domination of the slave population. In that moment, the 'metanarrative of power' was transformed into a 'metanarrative of emancipation'.

This modern and rational practice of human cruelty for economic and social domination on the one hand, and, the acquisition of human agency through violence on the other, leads Gilroy to question the idea of history as 'progress' where 'progress' is firmly associated with more humane practices and equal relations. For Gilroy the 'progress' of modern history is 'founded on the catastrophic rupture of the middle passage rather than the dream of revolutionary transformation'¹⁴⁵. From this perspective, the unequal order of racial difference and use of racial terror are not

¹⁴³The Black Atlantic, (London Verso, 1993), p221

¹⁴⁴ibid., p56

¹⁴⁵ibid., p197

anathema to modernity but are problematised as part of the inner character of modernity, what Gilroy describes as the ‘antinomies of modernity’.

In chapter 6 of this thesis the concept of rationality is a key organising theme for reflecting on the overall patterns of identity negotiation from my second case study. The narratives of the respondents suggest that although religious texts are the primary source for defining a Muslim lifestyle this process does not constitute ‘blind’ submission to the words of the Quran and sunnah. The individual negotiations of *being* Muslim incorporate rational choices and debate whereby aspects of the Quran and sunnah are often re-read to challenge the particular interpretations of Islam imposed by ‘molweesaabs’ and dictatorial Islamic regimes. The discussion does not interpret the rational negotiations of Islam as necessarily ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but identifies the presence of rational discourse as a position from which to consider the possibilities for according contemporary Muslim identities a distinctly modern status (see pp274-276).

Having established his own position on the origins of modern identities and modern subjectivities, Gilroy turns his attention to addressing the issue of how to construct a cultural politics which is able to provide the foundations for democracy proper. His starting point is an examination of the culturally fragmented character of postslave black cultural politics.

The black Atlantic

The familiar theme amongst hybridity theorists of describing modern cultures as ‘mongrel’ forms is explored, in Gilroy’s case, through the notion the ‘black Atlantic’. The reference to one of the world’s seas as opposed to a country, nation or continent is made precisely to overcome the static and definitive traits (such as borders, nation states, racial typology) that have become overly associated with the latter. The sea and the related mode of transport the ‘ship’ are central chronotopes in Gilroy’s theory of modern cultural identities. They evoke effigies of travel, movement and exchange and are positioned to encapsulate the effects of modern processes of migration (both voluntary and enforced) which have provoked ‘special problems and relationships between “race,” culture, nationality and ethnicity’. For Gilroy this is the moment that

marks the beginnings of modernity, 'when the histories and experiences of 'black' and 'white' people become entwined forever; when the languages of class and socialism become inadequate for making political sense of a world in which the concepts of nationality and culture have reached a fatal junction; when novel typologies and modes of identification emerge'¹⁴⁶.

Gilroy regards the black Atlantic as a specific consequence of these historical changes. In addition, the prefix 'black' intimates a distinction in the experiences and responses to the dynamics of modernity between 'black' and 'white' people. Gilroy makes this clear when he writes, 'This book addresses one small area in the grand consequence of this historical conjunction-the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within [...] the black Atlantic world'¹⁴⁷. The condition of occupying a vantage point that is informed by and/or composed of two or more cultures is described as a form of 'double consciousness', a term borrowed from the work of W.E.B. Dubois.

Double consciousness

Double consciousness can be described as a response for dealing with feelings of fragmentation and displacement that arise when two or more cultural systems or codes are in co-existence. It is a kind of *modus vivendi* which enables cultures that may differ to live together both in the minds of individuals and in their daily practices. In this respect Gilroy argues that 'striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness'¹⁴⁸. This is a main theme in Gilroy's conception of modern black subjectivity which he describes as being 'simultaneously located inside and outside the West'. By holding this duality at the centre of understanding black identification it becomes possible to conceive how the struggles of the oppressed have tended to revolve in an implicit cyclical process¹⁴⁹. The desire

¹⁴⁶ibid., pp2-3

¹⁴⁷ibid., p3

¹⁴⁸ibid., p1

¹⁴⁹In his more recent publications, see *Against Race*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000) and *Between Camps*, (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 2000), Gilroy makes this observation more concrete identifying dominant black cultural politics as being dogged by a 'camp' mentality which promotes ethnic particularity and in so doing reinforces mutually exclusive conceptions of 'race' what he refers to as 'modern raciology'.

to emancipate oneself from a subordinate position has resulted in political movements which have effectively exposed and challenged the uneven distribution of economic wealth and social prestige. But the desire 'to resemble the object' has meant that many movements have been driven by an end objective (which they may not achieve) of acquiring the power and wealth of the privileged. Gilroy exposes this more clearly through reference to Richard Wright's work and his use of Nietzsche's concept of 'frog's perspective' which positions blacks as:

[...] looking from below upward [...] a situation in which for moral or social reasons, a person or group feels that there is another person or group above it [...] A certain degree of hate combined with love (ambivalence) is always involved [...] He loves the object because he would like to resemble it; he hates the object because his chances of resembling it are remote, slight¹⁵⁰.

These contradictory elements of double consciousness are supported by data from my first case study, where the simultaneous consumption of popular/mainstream and Indian films has not resulted in a corresponding disruption of the hierarchy of cultures in which Western cultural forms are seen to be superior to those of the East.

Moreover, the notion of 'looking from below upward' is specifically reflected in the way in which respondents' comparisons and comments indicate a strong sense of how the strengths of popular/mainstream films might improve the quality of Indian films but not vice versa. These trends are used as a basis for problematising the precise link between diaspora cultural expressions and transgressive cultural change and are seen to confirm Gilroy's emphasis on the need to look beyond the enlightenment subject for disposing with systems of racial subordination (see pp169-172).

In seeking to redress the conflicting dimensions of double consciousness Gilroy re-opens the debate about the concepts of 'unity', 'tradition' and 'authenticity' and examines how they may be consolidated within a notion of 'diaspora' to provide a foundation for a coherent anti-racist politics.

Re-locating unity, tradition and authenticity in diaspora politics

Gilroy suggests that the real worth of the concept of diaspora for informing a transgressive cultural politics lies, 'in its attempt to specify differentiation and identity in a way which enables one to think about the issue of racial commonality outside of constricting binary frameworks - especially those that counterpose essentialism and pluralism'¹⁵¹. He explores and apprehends 'the issue of racial commonality' through an interrogation and refinement of popular conceptions of unity, tradition and authenticity. It should be noted that these concepts are differentiated to illustrate different aspects of the theme of 'connectedness' or 'commonality', but in reality they function in a complex and interdependent relationship.

Gilroy suggests that unlike the discourse of ontological essentialism in which 'unity' symbolises homogeneity, the concept of 'diaspora' accommodates 'unity' without compromising or rejecting difference. Gilroy refers to this more complex conception of 'unity' as 'a changing same' which he explains by describing the way in which the twelve inch single has been used to create various different 'mixes' of the same song.

Once dubbing, scratching and mixing appeared as new elements in the deconstructive and reconstructive scheme that joined production and consumption together, twelve-inch releases began to include a number of different mixes of the same song, supposedly for different locations or purposes. A dance mix, a radio mix, a capella mix, a dub mix, a jazz mix, a bass mix and so on. On the most elementary level, these plural forms make the abstract concept of a changing same a living, familiar reality.¹⁵²

'Unity' is thus configured as an imperceptible sensibility, or vibe, existing amongst individuals who may not necessarily share visibly identical styles or codes of life. In a similar vein, Gilroy contests the concept of 'authenticity' so that its meaning is no longer reliant on fixed origins or common characteristics. In identifying such a concept he recalls the song 'Proud of Mandela' originally written by the Impressions, a black 'trio' from Chicago, as the hit 'I'm So Proud'. Its reincarnation as 'Proud of Mandela' was the creation of black Briton's of African and Caribbean descent and

¹⁵⁰ibid., p161

¹⁵¹ibid., p120

was a testimony to the black South African activist Nelson Mandela. Gilroy suggests that if there is anything 'authentic' about this music it is in the fact that the various places within the black Atlantic world are brought 'seamlessly together', what Gilroy refers to as 'eccentric authenticity' and which he regards as promoting more subtle and subjective points of cohesion than those conveyed by 'blood' or 'roots'.

In evaluating the relevance of 'tradition' to the formation of modern diaspora cultures Gilroy begins by acknowledging how dominant conceptions have tended to fall into the two opposing positions of 'anti-tradition' and 'pro-tradition'. The former sees 'tradition' as modernity's antithesis symbolising styles and codes of life that belong to pre-modern eras. By comparison the second position regards 'tradition' as the key to black people's freedom and autonomy from white domination. Whilst the two opposing positions offer different judgements on the concept of 'tradition' their underlying definition of it is essentially the same. 'Tradition' is understood within the context of a linear idea of time in which the past and present are rigidly and sequentially ordered.

Gilroy's location of 'tradition' within the notion of 'diaspora' specifically functions to highlight the temporal aspects and to integrate them with the spatial characteristics of the diaspora idea. Diaspora temporality consists of such features as history, memory and narrativity and draws attention to the interactive relationship between the traditional and the modern. In doing so diaspora temporality disrupts the linear idea of time in a similar way that diaspora spaciality disrupts homogenously constituted categories of 'race' and culture.

The theme of connectedness proposed in Gilroy's work, and more specifically its emphasis on non-linear conceptions of time and space, is applied in my second case study to make sense of 'the polyvalency' of the practice of veiling whereby the veil as an affirmation of male domination in some Muslim societies is transformed in Britain as a form of female empowerment. The two contrasting situations arise precisely because of the contextually shifting temporal and spatial dynamics through which veiling takes on a very different meaning and significance when it is under the

¹⁵²ibid., p106

jurisdiction of the state (as in some Muslim societies) from when it is a matter of personal choice (as in Britain) (see pp267-273). The dynamics of time and space are also drawn upon to make sense of the contradictory trends in film consumption emerging from the first case study. This connection is described more specifically in the next section on Ali Rattansi who positions notions of time and space within his investigation in a similar way to Gilroy.

The re-inscription of the terms 'unity', 'authenticity' and 'tradition' within the concept of diaspora is crucial to Gilroy's framework for developing a model of identity which is neither a 'fixed essence' nor a 'wholly contingent construction'. More importantly the theme of connectedness, which runs through the revision of all three concepts, becomes imperative to his vision of global emancipation. Gilroy's investigation leads him to conclude that what is now required is a double edged politics that is reflective of the fractured experience of blacks in modernity. One side which he calls 'the politics of fulfilment' needs to insist that the positive outcomes of modernity should have a non-racialised effect. The other side 'the politics of transfiguration' engages with the 'antinomies of modernity'.

Ali Rattansi

The last writer chosen for discussion in this chapter is Ali Rattansi whose contribution to understanding modern cultural formations is presented as a piece in progress¹⁵³. Rattansi's contribution can be distinguished from the insights provided by Hall, Brah and Gilroy in that questions of cultural identity and identifying notions for a racially transgressive cultural politics are not engaged by focussing on or privileging one group over another. Rattansi does have a particular investment and interest in certain groups, such as South Asians, but his theoretical framework is not constructed through a critical examination of the experiences/cultural expressions of a specific category of people (e.g. slaves; South Asians; migrants; black musicians). Rather his starting point is to contextualise the 'postmodern condition' from which he theorises what he calls, a 'postmodern frame'. The purpose of this 'postmodern frame' is to

¹⁵³ 'Western' Racisms, Ethnicities and Identities in a 'Postmodern' Frame', in Racism, Modernity and Identity on the Western Front, edited by A. Rattansi & S. Westwood, (London, Polity Press, 1994), pp15-86

‘enable new productive directions to be taken in the analysis of western racisms, ethnicities and identities’¹⁵⁴.

The relevance of Rattansi’s approach for the arguments I develop below is that, like Gilroy’s work, it demands that alongside identifying a position from which racially transgressive change becomes possible it is also necessary to ask why such a position has failed to take hold in an effective way. With respect to this Rattansi emphasises the significance of understanding the ‘inner character of modernity’ which is also the starting point for my analysis of his work.

Modernity’s idiosyncrasies

Rattansi notes that the origins of modernity are commonly understood to be located at the point where the search for answers to questions about ‘nature and humanity’ are no longer governed by religion and a faith in God but through the rigours of scientific discipline and Reason. Whilst Rattansi accepts the suggestion of postmodern theorists, such as Giddens and Bauman, that ‘industrialisation, urbanisation, commodification and [...] rapid social change are constitutive of Western modernity, and that modernity is in diverse ways a global phenomenon’¹⁵⁵, he registers two overall reservations which inform his more detailed interpretation of modernity. The first is that contemporary conceptions of modernity pay inadequate attention to the systematic regulation and control of human behaviour directly arising from modern capitalist social relations. Rattansi’s second reservation about postmodernists’ accounts of modernity is their profound ethnocentrism which he argues has left an aching gap and huge silence on the relationship between Western racisms and the project of modernity.

With these two general criticisms in mind, Rattansi addresses and defines the more specific features and dynamics of the ‘modern’ condition for his own theoretical framework. He begins with a critical analysis of the suggestion that one of the main consequences of modernity’s investment in science and Reason is a compelling pursuit and reliance upon systems of classification and social order. Drawing upon

¹⁵⁴ibid., p78

¹⁵⁵ibid., p23

Foucault's configuration of power/knowledge he describes how the movements of individuals and their bodies are regulated through surveillance and discipline carried out by a variety of modern institutions including prisons, schools, hospitals etc. In that sense 'the identities of Western modernity must be seen as constructed through processes of 'normalisation' but which have the effect of marginalising those Other populations - among a diverse group, the insane, the sick, the criminalised, the educational failures or the 'ineducables', and those workers labelled incompetent or disabled'¹⁵⁶.

Rattansi views the antithetical or oppositional alignment of races, which is a key feature of modern racisms, as an example of grading and classification. He supports this assertion by noting Bauman's analysis of the Holocaust and how the Nazi objective to eliminate the Jews 'routinely involved' various features of modernity. The Nazi's effectively categorised the Jew as a contaminating alien threatening the national culture and therefore in need of being weeded out. Bureaucratic rationality and scientific Reason took away the need for moral and ethical debates. The Nazi objective to systematically categorise and exterminate Jews vividly illustrates the extreme consequences of that highly prized modern trait of 'rational' calculation.

Rattansi points out that this mode of making sense of all things and all places through systematic categorisation does not monopolise modern thought and modern relations. Modernity's 'striving for classificatory order' co-exists with the contrasting processes of democratisation and globalisation which have the effect of stimulating '*new* forms of hybridisation, syncretism, fusion, difference and incommensurability'¹⁵⁷. This has opened up spaces for a multiplicity of political associations and subjectivities to develop and be heard, thereby undermining the certainty of singularly constructed 'truths' offered by the disciplines of science and Reason. The new economic, political and cultural formations know no boundaries of 'race', ethnicity, nation etc.

Rattansi describes the conflicting features of modernity as representing a duality between 'order' and 'chaos'. His 'postmodern frame' acknowledges 'that modernity's subjects are able to occupy different discursive positions, to switch codes and

¹⁵⁶ibid., p26

registers, and to negotiate between different cultural modalities'¹⁵⁸. On the one hand 'there is a striving for order' and on the other 'there is an excitement, exhilaration and anxiety produced by rapid change and the proliferation of choices'¹⁵⁹. My second case study offers an interesting insight into the tension between 'order' and 'chaos' and how it impacts upon the individual's 'sense of self'. As has already been noted, a recurrent reason offered by the respondents in explanation for the singling out of Islam as the defining axis of identification is a yearning for stability and certainty. Moreover the precursor to this yearning for stability is related to the particular experience of chaos, of engaging multiple axes of difference which, as one respondent suggests, begins to 'blur the boundaries between good and bad'. Here the search for stability is directly linked to a quest for truth and reason which are also key principles associated with modernity (see pp274-276). These connections are used to accord the Muslim identities presented in chapter 6 a distinctly modern status.

The tension between 'order' and 'chaos' is defined in Rattansi's postmodern frame as a 'heightened reflexivity'¹⁶⁰ and is identified as the feature which distinguishes the 'postmodern' subject from the modern. In Rattansi's words, it is 'a mode of being both inside and outside modernity, of stepping back, or out, and looking in, while still having one foot and eye, so to speak, inside modernity'¹⁶¹.

Decentring and de-essentialisation of the subject and the social

The complexity and significance of modernity's conflicting features as regards analysing modern identities is unpacked in Rattansi's 'postmodern frame' through the

¹⁵⁷ibid., p28

¹⁵⁸ibid., p24

¹⁵⁹ibid., p25

¹⁶⁰Rattansi does acknowledge differences in interpretation of the concept of 'heightened reflexivity' amongst postmodernists. For example, Bauman perceives it as a phase in which the impossibility of modernity fulfilling its 'promise' to uncover the 'truth' is widely acknowledged. By comparison, Giddens interprets an increased 'reflexivity' as emerging from within modernity, as the 'self clarification' of modern thought and not a replacement or rejection of it. Rattansi does not adjudicate on the two positions and clarifies that it is the commonality between the two perspectives, in that neither writer is at odds with the idea of a 'heightened reflexivity', that informs his own usage of the term and which he defines as 'the critical reflection of the character, limits, and foundations of modernity'.

¹⁶¹ibid., p19

concepts of 'decentring' and 'de-essentialisation'. The two concepts are interrelated and, generally speaking, take account of how the modern conditions of ambivalence and otherness position the subject in *uncertain* ways. More specifically, 'decentring' emphasises that there is no unique rational 'vantage point' from which all identities can be grasped and defined. 'De-essentialisation' extends this line of argument by drawing attention to the presence of numerous and variable elements that inform and affect identity formations. The decentring and de-essentialisation of the subject and the social is more clearly stitched into Rattansi's 'postmodern frame' through non-linear conceptions of time and space. Here Rattansi draws upon the concepts of difference and dislocation, as used by Derrida and Laclau respectively.

In summary, difference enables a conception of identity in which the idea of 'a pure origin' is replaced by 'the ever-present potential of a play of signification'¹⁶². If identities can be located and defined at all it is always with the proviso that they are open to revision and reinterpretation at any time. In a similar vein, dislocation 'posits '[...] a field of relational semi-identities in which "political", "economic" and "ideological" elements all enter into unstable relations of imbrication without ever managing to constitute themselves as separate objects'¹⁶³. What is implied here is an endless displacement and cross cutting of boundaries within which identities are (re)constituted.

Building on the 'theoretical infrastructure' provided by Derrida and Laclau, Rattansi draws attention to the interrelationship between time/space characteristics. In the specific context of Western modernity he suggests that globalisation processes generate an erratic and continuous re-structuring of the 'local' and 'global'. The ease and speed with which individuals and information can be accessed globally produces a 'shrinking of global spatiality' in which public conceptions of time and space become increasingly compressed and incoherent. Similarly, migration, another key feature of globalisation, is described by Rattansi as having a potentially 'explosive' impact for spatial organisation. Racially diverse populations on the one hand enhance the chances for cultural exchange and building new relationships, but on the other

¹⁶²ibid., p30

increase the potential 'for racialized conflict and violence'¹⁶⁴. What needs to be underlined here is that neither time nor space follow a neat linear sequence but are defined as products of a criss-crossing of 'old' and 'new' narratives and processes.

Rattansi's theorisation of time/space dynamics closely resembles Gilroy's incorporation of the same themes in his understanding of 'diaspora'. As such the particular application of notions of time/space for examining Muslim subjectivities that was identified in the context of Gilroy's work (see p99) is reinforced by Rattansi's insights. The respective pieces are also drawn upon in the first case study to expand the direction of analysis provided by Gilroy's understanding of double consciousness. Specifically, the non-linear conceptions of time/space are used to shed light on the dynamics behind the trends in film consumption which simultaneously fragment the cultural landscape of Britain (in that Indian films sit alongside popular/mainstream films) but leave the hierarchical arrangement of cultures intact (in that Indian films are still seen to be aesthetically inferior to popular/mainstream films). These findings are interpreted as providing an illustration of how 'old' and 'new' narratives are interwoven into the process of cultural negotiation (see pp165-168).

Relations of the psychic and the social

For Rattansi, the complex interweaving of 'old' and 'new' narratives is made still more complex by the play of the unconscious. In this respect he points to the usefulness of psychoanalytic approaches in conceptualising 'a subject whose unconscious desires, including sexual desire, constantly disrupt the conscious logic of intention and rationality'¹⁶⁵. By way of illustration, Rattansi draws on a wide-range of writers, including Mason, Gilman, Mills, and Ware, to suggest that European constructions of black people as hyper-sexual, subhuman creatures were essentially a displacement of white European male sexuality¹⁶⁶. In short, the ability to dominate

¹⁶³ibid., p31

¹⁶⁴ibid., p33

¹⁶⁵ibid., 34

¹⁶⁶Rattansi acknowledges the significant contribution made by Bhabha in taking the work of Said's Orientalism a step further and exposing that the dynamics between 'coloniser' and 'colonised' are not

and subordinate the Other was dependent on the construction of an identity which was necessarily masculine, essentially rational and notably civilised. Everything that this identity could not be, such as sexual and emotional, was projected onto the Other who thus became the object of 'fantasy and desire' as well as 'anxiety and fear'.

The intertwining of discourses of racial and sexual difference imbricated in modern structures and relations underlines how even the most seemingly uncomplicated modern identities are complexly located and defined and cannot be unpacked by strong classificatory frameworks. This, Rattansi suggests, is precisely the strength of the 'postmodern frame', in that its deconstructive power provides '*a framework that makes these problems intelligible*'¹⁶⁷.

Deconstructive power of the 'postmodern frame'

The constant overlapping and cross-cutting of boundaries in the formation of modern identities leads Rattansi to conclude that 'ethnicity, racism and the myriad terms in-between [...] are permanently [...] caught in the impossibility of fixity and essentialisation'¹⁶⁸. Responding to the need to replace water tight definitions Rattansi advocates 'foucauldian genealogical projects'. He unpacks the overall implications of this for his 'postmodern frame' through the particular appropriation of the concept of ethnicity.

The 'postmodern frame' 'conceptualises *ethnicity* as part of a *cultural politics of representation*'¹⁶⁹. In essence, ethnicity is problematised as a configuration arising out of a complex and volatile network of processes of identification and representation. Here identification is broken down as involving processes of 'self-identification', as well as forms of identification constructed by disciplinary agencies such as the state. Similarly, 'representation', within the notion 'cultural politics of representation', operates in a 'double sense'. On the one hand, it draws attention to the ethnic

constrained by fixed divisions in that feelings of 'ambivalence' introduce more complex dimensions to the encounter. However, he adds that Bhabha's insight, like Said's, is limited in that questions of 'race and sexuality are rarely confronted directly'.

¹⁶⁷op.cit, p59

¹⁶⁸ibid., p53

¹⁶⁹ibid., p57

identities or 'imagined communities' (re)produced and bonded together by visual and written narratives circulated by the various mediums of 'popular' and 'high' culture (such as newspapers; television; theatre; music; novels etc). On the other hand, 'representation' also includes the articulations of ethnic identity asserted in 'communal views and 'interests'', with a particular emphasis on analysing the conflictual relations and manner through which 'communal interests' get debated and defined.

In order to accommodate the complex ways in which processes of identification and representation unfold Rattansi advocates decentred and de-essentialised applications of the variety of terms related to modern subjectivities including ethnicity, 'race', racism, ethnocentrism and so on. In summary this amounts to appropriating the respective concepts in a non-definitive and unboundaried way so that the potential of 'interpenetration' is always being accommodated/assessed. Rattansi illustrates the distinctive benefits of applying non-essentialist conceptions of identity negotiation in the context of challenging modern racisms. He suggests that anti-racist strategies have all too often oversimplified the dynamics of racism as a unified and consistent process of discrimination and inferiorisation. However, as has already been highlighted in the earlier discussions of *ambivalence*, racism arises out feelings of 'desire' and 'envy' as much as 'repulsion' and 'fear'. The underlying point here is that, it is only by retaining and responding to, as opposed to simplifying, the intertwining of racist and anti-racist sentiments that it becomes possible to tease out and challenge modern racisms more effectively than hitherto.

This theme of the interpenetration of anti-racist and racist discourses in defining modern relations is identified across my two case studies. The respective findings reveal how feelings of superiority/inferiority are reinvented within 'diaspora' subjectivities because of the persisting and highly racialised climate in which they are negotiated and expressed. For example, the hierarchical organisation of Indian and popular/mainstream films amongst South Asian youth is found to have little to do with attaining more or less pleasure from one text over another. Rather the situation arises precisely because the interaction of the two categories of films does not exist in an independent or neutral space but one where even the most fundamental of

decisions of choosing one text over another often means choosing one peer group over another (see pp180-182). The second case study provides a vastly different insight into the interpenetration of anti-racist and racist discourses in defining modern relations. The non Asian respondents recount how dominant 'British' conceptions of Muslims as being of Asian origin means that members of the indigenous population often find it difficult to accept them as Muslims. As such their Muslim identities become a focus for interaction around behaviour deemed out of the 'norm' such as not handling pork or wanting to move homes in order to be near a mosque. My analysis describes how such dynamics contribute to heighten awareness and position negotiations of *being* Muslim in a highly racialised context (see pp222-225). These observations are used to highlight the resilience of the process of racialisation amidst dynamics of 'cultural mutation'.

A 'new' cultural politics of difference

Rattansi expands upon the benefits of the deconstructive approach of the 'postmodern frame' in the context of the 'phenomenon of new ethnicities'. The emphasis here shifts from identifying how the criss-crossing of boundaries and discourses interrupts and destabilises 'neat' classifications and 'rationally' constituted identities, to delineating how the criss-crossing of boundaries and discourses gives rise to new 'hybrid' cultural configurations and a new cultural politics of difference.

Drawing significantly on Hall's conception of 'new ethnicities' Rattansi notes the emergence of culturally transgressive and non-absolutist identity formations. Marked by the distinct characteristic of borrowing and fusing Western, Asian, African and other cultural practices, the 'new ethnicities' are described as signifying a transition from an essentialist cultural politics organised around 'unifying' concepts such as black, to a politics driven by an engagement with difference. As a result the relations between 'margin' and 'centre' are no longer governed by a 'struggle over the relations of representation' but by a 'politics of representation' (see earlier section on Hall pp70-71).

The significance that Rattansi and Hall accord to a 'politics of representation' in overcoming mutually exclusive dynamics of 'race' and culture provides a key

framework for contesting the racially transgressive qualities of the Muslim identities presented in chapter 6. My analysis highlights two crucial points. Firstly, that the culturally fragmented contestations of identity negotiation which a 'politics of representation' emphasises are apparent in many of the respondents' negotiations of *being* Muslim and are specifically found in such instances as the re-reading of key Islamic texts to challenge patriarchal gender relations. Secondly, in order to defeat a neo-conservative Muslim politics it is necessary for the culturally fragmented contestations of *being* Muslim to be given more prominence in dominant discourses. In this regard, my discussion emphasises that the 'politics of representation' needs to be engaged by both Muslims and non Muslims (see pp239-246).

In essence Rattansi's investigation stresses the 'intertwining of discourses' as peculiar to the 'postmodern condition' which characterises the variety of contemporary subjectivities. From this position the racialisation process, like the process of hybridisation, is understood to be complex and fractured by feelings of ambivalence. Thus, essentialist anti-racist discourses are seen to be ineffective because they oversimplify the dynamics of 'race' and racism into two mutually exclusive positions of 'racist' and 'victim'. This is what connects Rattansi's position with other 'hybridity' theorists in that racially transgressive cultural change is seen to emerge from non-essentialist conceptions of culture and identity.

Summary

Taken together, the four sections above highlight that contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' have not emerged out of a single coherent theory or academic discipline. If the respective works share a point of origin at all, then that is encapsulated in Stuart Hall's conception of the 'end of the essential black subject' and its specific assertion that homogenous conceptions of 'race' and ethnicity are ill-equipped to capture the culturally fragmented character of modern identities, let alone establish a non-racialised future. The themes of 'difference', cultural pluralism, loss of a 'stable sense of self', transnational identifications and so on, with which 'cultural hybridity' is more commonly associated, are given critical significance in each of the respective expositions. These overall similarities underline each writer's emphasis on

non-essentialist conceptions of 'race' as being vital to the constitution of a racially transgressive cultural politics.

Beyond the overall similarities there are nevertheless significant differences in the social and historical contexts that provide the background for each writer's investigation. Hall develops his understanding of 'cultural hybridity' by examining the 'new' logic of capital and the 'migrant condition'. Post-war diaspora formations and the particular experiences of South Asians are the basis for Brah's analysis. In Gilroy's case it is the 'inner character of modernity' and the condition of 'double consciousness' that are the focus for discussion. Rattansi devotes his attention to unpacking the 'postmodern' condition. A main consequence of these distinctly different paths of analysis is that across the works there is no agreed position as to how exactly the process of hybridisation might be exploited for encouraging anti-racist sensibilities. For example, Hall remains focused on exposing how a position of 'cultural hybridity' interweaves distinct cultural narratives such that they can't be represented by fixed categories. Brah, on the other hand, tilts the balance of emphasis to addressing what exactly is being *articulated* and understanding the dynamics of power defining particular subject positions. For Gilroy, assessing the transgressive qualities of hybrid cultures means examining how they disrupt the 'antinomies of modernity'. Rattansi foregrounds the emergence of decentred and de-essentialised subjectivities that are responsive to the complex character of racism. The differences between the writers do not indicate different conceptions of 'hybridity' as such, but emphasise different concerns as to how best to establish its transgressive qualities.

It is in the context of identifying how exactly 'culturally hybrid' subjectivities disrupt processes of racialisation that some of the writers develop and emphasise specific features and notions that are not so readily associated with 'cultural hybridity'. Brah and Gilroy's analyses provide the most vivid examples of this in their exploration of such concepts as 'politics of location', the 'subtext of home' and 'unity', 'tradition' and 'authenticity'. By undertaking a separate analysis of each writer's work this chapter has been able to give just as much prominence to the internal differences and relatively unexplored aspects of the respective works as their similarities. In providing this more balanced insight into contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' the

critical review has established a theoretical framework from which it will be possible to arrive at a more considered position about the value of 'cultural hybridity' in informing more equal structures of interaction between nations, cultures and 'races'. The strengths and limitations of the work presented in this chapter are now examined in the context of two social and historically specific case studies examining the everyday cultural realities of sections of the British South Asian population.

Chapter 3

Quantitative Survey Design for Examining 'Audience Activity'

The next two chapters are concerned with discussing my questionnaire survey which examines the patterns of consumption of films on videotape amongst sections of the South Asian population in London. Chapter 4 provides a detailed interpretation of the survey findings. It draws upon the theoretical work presented in chapter 2 to identify the significance of the empirical data for providing an insight into everyday cultural realities, and uses the survey findings to contest the relevance of theories of 'cultural hybridity' for understanding everyday dynamics of 'race' and culture. In this chapter, my concern is to describe and evaluate my methodological approach relating to the survey design, questionnaire distribution and coding of the results.

The chapter consists of four sections. The first three sections detail the various stages through which the specific objectives, structure and wording of the questionnaire were identified, revised and finalised. The fourth section outlines the process of administering the survey and addresses related issues including student assistance, methods of distribution, sample bias, data coding and the scope and limitations of the findings. Another related issue concerning the suitability of a quantitative survey for gaining an insight into everyday cultural realities is dealt with separately in chapter 7. This concerns the methodological stance of 'new' audience researchers who favour qualitative rather than quantitative research methods as the most suitable for investigating audience behaviour. Quantitative techniques are found to be inadequate because they reduce individuals and their behaviour to quantifiable units and are unable to respond to the complex and subjective elements which essentially give 'meaning' to the act of viewing. In chapter 7 I review the methodological debates within 'new' audience studies and highlight the idea that quantitative research is crucial for providing a context through which to make sense of qualitative observations and their precise contribution to understanding the cultural dynamics characterising modern societies. Thus, I argue that rather than endorsing one method over another it is more appropriate to understand and exploit the differing strengths of each.

To return to the content of this chapter, the process through which the structure of the questionnaire and its administration were finalised can be subdivided into three stages. They are: initial conceptualisation; pre-pilot; and pilot. I give details of each in chronological order.

Initial Conceptualisation

Many of the established commentaries and practical guides on survey research¹⁷⁰ observe that the roots of inaccurate or meaningless data often lie not in the instruments of measurement or interpretation but insufficient design and planning. The degree of emphasis that should be placed on developing hypotheses for investigation and finalising research techniques is captured in Oppenheim's point that, 'contrary to expectations, the fieldwork stage is often shorter than the preliminary stages'¹⁷¹.

The specific objectives and structure of my own questionnaire survey were identified and refined over a period of 15 months. The initial conceptualisation¹⁷² had two broad aims. These were, firstly, to investigate black people's viewing practices regarding films on videotape; and secondly, to analyse critically the relationship between theoretical approaches to audiences and viewing on the one hand, and issues of black spectatorship on the other. The original conception also envisaged the empirical research eliciting quantitative data from a questionnaire based survey followed by more qualitative data derived from individual and/or group interviews. This provisional framework was developed prior to my appointment to develop the initial research idea within the specific context of undertaking a doctoral thesis. Further, the initial research conceptualisation was presented as being open to revision and change in light of my own interests and direction of thought. As I embarked on the work I

¹⁷⁰see for example, A.N. (Bram) Oppenheim, Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, (London, Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1992)

Gerald Hoinville & Roger Jowell, Survey Research Practice, (London, Heineman, 1978)

Duane F. Alwin, ed., Survey Design and Analysis, (London, Sage, 1978)

Herbert H. Hyman, Survey Design and Analysis, (London, Free Press, 1955)

¹⁷¹Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, (London, Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1992), p8

¹⁷²The initial idea was conceived by Lola Young who at the time (1994) was Senior Lecturer and Head of Media and Cultural Studies at Middlesex University. With the support of Professor Alan Durant a

exploited the freedom to impose my own research priorities and interests, such that the overall objective and focus of the audience research and its position within the thesis were clarified and redefined in three significant ways.

Firstly, the initial conception of conducting a study on 'black' audiences was more specifically narrowed down to South Asian audiences. This decision was made whilst undertaking a number of pre-pilot discussions and is described in more detail below (see pp115-117). Secondly, in the course of identifying a suitable theoretical framework through which to contextualise the subjects of my empirical research, i.e. sections of the black population, I was not surprisingly drawn to the body of work examining the identity politics of contemporary migrant cultures. My focus on the work of Brah, Gilroy, Hall and Rattansi is explained in chapter 2 (see pp63-65). The work of these individuals, who for shorthand I've referred to as 'hybridity theorists', became the focal point around which to construct the central concerns of the thesis, i.e. to assess whether contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' can be productively mobilised to establish a racially transgressive cultural politics. Within this framework the empirical audience research was to provide a specific context for evaluating the relevance of the work of hybridity theorists in understanding everyday cultural realities and experiences of 'race'.

Thirdly, as I began to unpack the various theoretical expositions of 'cultural hybridity' I became increasingly interested in expanding my critique beyond the field of media audiences. The main reason for this was that I wanted to seriously problematise and address Jonathan Friedman's criticism about how the work of hybridity theorists with its predominant focus on literature, film and music constitutes an ethno-genealogical method which has little to do with 'identity on the street'¹⁷³. For sure, media consumption is for most people in Britain an integral part of their daily realities and routines, but media texts are still abstract cultural expressions. More importantly, consumption is a site of cultural negotiation which is positively encouraged by Western democracies. In that sense the dynamics of 'race' in relation

bursary was secured and advertised to appoint a research student to develop the initial research idea in conjunction with doing a PhD. I was appointed in April 1994.

¹⁷³ 'Global Crises, The Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp70-89

to media consumption are played out in a context where capitalist industry has a vested interest in responding to the tastes of both dominant and subordinate groups. In response to this I felt it pertinent to situate conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' in a more contentious context of cultural differentiation and negotiation, i.e. a notion of identity deemed antagonistic to advanced capitalist democracies where the dynamics of 'race' would be positioned differently than in the context of media consumption. A study examining Muslim identities was an obvious choice not only because of my own background and interests, but because of the current rise in Western fears of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the corresponding increase in racism directed towards Muslims. There is an additional connection here with regards to the thesis' focus on South Asians in that the majority of Muslims in Britain are of South Asian descent¹⁷⁴.

The benefit of expanding the empirical focus to include 'Muslim' identities was that by contesting 'cultural hybridity' in the contrasting contexts of media consumption and religious negotiation it would be possible to gain a more complex, and also realistic, insight into the relevance of 'cultural hybridity' for understanding modern dynamics of 'race'. To create space for a separate study on Muslim identities I narrowed the initial conceptualisation of the audience study to focus on examining overall trends in tastes and consumption of films on videotape amongst South Asians without additional investigation(s) into individual readings of texts and/or use of domestic technologies. In place of the qualitative interviews envisaged as a follow-up to the audience survey I undertook a small scale study on young Muslim identities (see chapters 5 and 6).

To work out the details of how the revised objectives of the audience study were to be translated into a questionnaire survey a number of pre-pilot discussions with samples of potential respondents were organised.

Pre-Pilot

The ambiguities raised by the term black and its inclusion in the provisional title for this study, i.e. *Black on Black: Audience, Ethnicity and Film*, meant that the question of 'who is being researched?' needed to be clarified. Hall points out that whilst the

¹⁷⁴see Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp10-26

signifier black has functioned in a progressive way 'to win some space' for disadvantaged groups within mainstream discourses, it has done so by essentialising difference¹⁷⁵. The purpose of the pre-pilot discussions was to clarify 'who' the questionnaire was to be aimed at as well as identify key areas for investigation. In arranging these discussions I decided to focus on the two largest groups in England often embraced within the term black, i.e. people of South Asian and African Caribbean background.

A total of 6 pre-pilot discussions were arranged in different parts of London with groups of different age, gender and religious background. The groups also differed in their size and social make-up. They included an elders' day centre, an extended family, a young women's group and the committee members of a community association. The exploratory purpose of these meetings meant that they were fairly unstructured and covered a wide range of issues related to consumption of films which I now summarise.

The first three discussions were carried out with selected members of the South Asian community. The wealth of information raised by these first discussions already began to draw my attention to the possibility of focusing the questionnaire survey on just one of the two groups. The main reason for entertaining this scenario was the realisation that probing into some of the complexities specific to each group would have to be weighed against the opportunity for contrast. For example, the first three discussions established the huge significance of popular Indian cinema in South Asian households. By comparison, as the fourth pre-pilot discussion revealed, Indian films were not an integral part of the film culture of individuals of African Caribbean background who expressed a greater interest in 'black films'¹⁷⁶ than South Asian respondents. In addition, whilst South Asian respondents were reliant on Indian video outlets to access Indian films, African Caribbean respondents were reliant on specific

¹⁷⁵'What is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture', in Black Popular Culture, edited by G. Dent, (Seattle, Bay Press, 1992), pp21-33

¹⁷⁶'Black films' was defined by one of the group as films which had been black financed and directed whilst others used the term in a broader sense to include those films with a black cast. Examples included *Sugar Hill*, *Menace to Society*, *Crooklyn*, *Meteor Man*, *Sankofa* and *Unforgiven*.

cinemas, such as The Electric, for their access to and participation in a 'black film' culture.

In identifying how best to proceed with the survey several options were considered. One questionnaire could still have been developed and distributed amongst both groups. However, to have accommodated the differences and multiple possible answers that had been relayed during the pre-pilot discussions would have resulted in a rather lengthy questionnaire with sections and options not applicable to all respondents and therefore likely to be off-putting. A more attractive option would have been to develop two questionnaires, each tailored for one group. The decision not to proceed with this idea was largely as a result of feeling daunted by the 'simultaneous' responsibility of managing two separate, albeit interrelated, surveys. There were other practical considerations too. For instance, channelling all available resources on a survey of one broad ethnic group would directly increase the number of responses from that group, thereby enhancing the ability to make more significant observations and comparisons from the data collated. All things considered my personal conclusion was that to narrow the focus of the research to one group would be the most economical and effective for the purposes of the thesis. Choosing between the two groups was not too difficult given my own background and familiarity with South Asian culture and the ability to converse in two of the languages i.e. Urdu and Gujarati. This decision was taken soon after the fourth pre-pilot discussion and two additional appointments with individuals of African Caribbean background (a nuclear family, and a mixed sex youth group) were cancelled.

Key areas for investigation

The three discussions with South Asian groups had highlighted a number of areas for consideration in the drafting of the questionnaire, e.g. many respondents watched popular Indian films as often, if not more often, than mainstream English language films; significant numbers complained that the picture and sound quality of hired Indian films on videotape tended to be very poor; and those subscribing to cable and satellite television indicated significantly less recourse to rent Indian films than previously. The pre-pilot discussions also touched on a number of other issues related to the broader context of media consumption. Many respondents begrudged having to

buy a television licence because they felt that the BBC and terrestrial television in general failed to cater for the diversity of their tastes. At the same time respondents emphasised how there was always a noticeable degree of excitement amongst family and friends when terrestrial channels screened anything specific to “their” culture, such as *The Mahabharata*.

As well as providing a kind of skeletal framework of the main areas for investigation, the pre-pilot discussions also highlighted the type and variety of categories that might be offered for particular multiple choice questions. These points along with those from reading around academic audience studies and comments from supervisors/colleagues were consolidated into the first draft of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). I have purposefully not discussed the content of the pre-pilot discussions in any great detail for the reason that they were not conducted to elicit data for critical analysis. However, I do refer to some verbatim quotes in chapter 4 to provide background information to help make sense of the statistical data emerging from the final survey.

It should be noted that in drafting the questionnaire for the pilot stage I was keen to ensure that its content was as sensitive as possible to the ‘new’ audience argument, (albeit using a method of research not advocated by ‘new’ audience scholars), that the consumption of any medium, say television, should ‘be seen, not in isolation, but as one of a number of information and communication technologies, occupying domestic time and space’¹⁷⁷. In response to this the pilot questionnaire had sections on different types of media technologies.

Before moving on to discuss the results of the pilot there is one methodological question raised earlier which deserves separate consideration: the question of ‘who is being researched?’ demanded an identification of how research subjects and their responses were to be categorised. In the following section I discuss the questions and categories which generated most debate around wording and summarise my reasoning behind the final choice of terms.

¹⁷⁷David Morley, *Television Audiences and Cultural Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1992), p201

Categorisation

In his analysis of research conducted in the United States, John H. Stanfield argues that much 'race' and ethnic categorisation is imbued with common sense notions of 'race'. Although Stanfield's focus is North America, as he himself points out his observations are relevant to other Western nations where 'race' and ethnic categories pre-dominate in how individuals define themselves and are defined by others. He states,

The vast majority of literature on racially defined populations in the United States is rooted in taken-for-granted objectified conceptions of racial identity. This has resulted in a number of fallacies in the meaning of racial group membership that have functioned more to legitimate ideologies regarding objectified notions of racial differences than to offer accurate empirical evidence regarding the complexities of human identity in race-centred societies.¹⁷⁸

Stanfield goes on to point out that, as limited as they might be, the embeddedness of 'race' and ethnic categories in people's everyday language and conceptions of who they are makes it impossible to eliminate them completely from empirical research. Stanfield offers two suggestions for sensitising his observations in research designs. Firstly, he argues that a great deal can be learnt about structuring research processes by considering literature which addresses the intricate ways in which dominant and subordinate relations become culturally and politically defined. With reference to my own survey this point was addressed in chapter 1. Through a critique of three audience studies I was able to identify the diverse and shifting terms of reference which impact upon the dynamics of 'race' and ethnicity within the act of media consumption. These included terms of reference as diverse as the historical representations of blacks in mainstream texts, as illustrated in Bobo's study, to the (re)negotiation of cultural practices such as arranged marriage, as identified in Gillespie's research.

¹⁷⁸'Epistemological Considerations', in *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, edited by J.H. Stanfield & R. M. Dennis, (London, Sage, 1993), p18

Stanfield's second suggestion for developing empirical studies that are sensitive to internally differentiated concepts of 'race' and ethnicity is to invite input from 'human subjects who may call into question the theoretical assumptions or methodological strategies of the researcher'¹⁷⁹. The pre-pilot and pilot stages of the survey created the opportunity for both the overall hypothesis as well as the specific wording of the questionnaire to be informed by individuals fitting the subject profile of my target population. It is appropriate to explain more fully the reasoning behind some of the wording and categories used in the questionnaire.

So far as ascertaining the 'race' and ethnicity of individuals was concerned I resolved that the best approach would be to use a combination of questions which would enable me to break the category of South Asian down. For the question asking individuals to indicate their ethnic group I utilised categories consistent with the different countries of the Indian sub-continent (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan etc, see Appendix A question 4b). This was combined with several questions relating to a range of other aspects of people's 'race' and ethnic identities including place of birth; language(s) spoken; area of residence; religion and so on (see Appendix A questions 4a, 5, 6 and 7). These questions were clearly designed to collect factual differences and do not of course measure the subjective ways in which people construct and define themselves. Nevertheless some indication of internal group differences can be ascertained by crosstabulating responses to a variety of questions relating to social background. For example, where women indicate an overwhelming dislike of violence on the screen compared to men's indifference to it we might identify 'sex' as the underlying factor behind that difference. However, the precise way in which 'sex' functions to create this difference is not explained by the simple observation that men and women are two biologically different sexes. It has to do with the collision of 'sex' with a number of other variables including household structure; employment status; experience of violence; historical constructions of gender roles and so on. Aspects of some of these variables can be identified factually, such as occupation and type of household. This would appear to be Hall's point when in his delineation of 'new ethnicities' he writes, 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that

¹⁷⁹ibid., p32

position [...]. We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are'¹⁸⁰.

The categorisation of other aspects of respondents' backgrounds such as class were resolved by adopting a similar strategy to that described above, i.e. identifying the various measurable elements which might give an indication of a person's class such as income levels, educational qualification, job status and so on. Aside from the personal detail questions, a significant amount of time was also spent debating the choice of terms to describe mainstream English language films and popular films from the Indian sub-continent.

The pre-pilot discussions indicated that in their everyday conversations respondents invariably used the terms 'English films' and 'Hollywood films' to refer to texts from mainstream British film culture. Neither of these categories was deemed appropriate for the pilot questionnaire. The term 'English films' was rejected on the grounds that this would exclude non English films which had also made their way into the mainstream. The term Hollywood on its own was seen to raise similar problems. Recognising that Hollywood texts dominated popular British film culture the term 'mainstream/Hollywood' was coined for the pilot questionnaire. This was revised again after the pilot (see p128). Choosing the category 'Indian films' posed fewer dilemmas, as the other most popular terms used by respondents during the preliminary stages were 'Bollywood films' and 'Hindi films'. The former term was not seen to be suitable due to its underlying connotation implying that Indian films are inferior to Hollywood films. 'Hindi films' was also deemed inappropriate because of its emphasis on Hindi culture and language which is representative of the vast majority, but not all, texts produced by the popular Indian film industry.

In terms of eliciting information about the features attracting individuals to particular types of texts the genre categories of Western films provided one framework. However, these were not appropriate for differentiating Indian films. As Rajadhyaksha and Willems point out, 'a great deal more work needs to be done on the problems of defining, analysing and periodising genres in Indian cinema'. They

¹⁸⁰'New Ethnicities', in *Black Film. British Cinema*, edited by K. Mercer, (London, ICA, 1988), p29

add, ‘many films deliberately combine, as in a menu, what in the West would be regarded as different genres (comedy, thriller, action, musical and so on)’¹⁸¹. Thus, the pilot questionnaire asked individuals to indicate not only which genres they preferred but also the kind of factors that influenced their choice of film, such as actors/actresses; storyline; language and so on (see Appendix A question 26a).

When the first draft of the questionnaire was complete one final decision that needed to be made before piloting was whether to have it translated, and if so into which languages. In arriving at a decision the main points considered were the size of the financial budget available, the costs for translation and the most common languages amongst the population targeted. The three most common languages amongst potential respondents were identified as Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu. For the small numbers to be involved in the pilot and the cost for one translation totalling over £400+, the decision was taken to proceed with one translation. Gujarati was chosen as it was the most common language across the two boroughs which I had already decided would be the main focus for the final questionnaire i.e. Newham and Kingston. In addition many of the older generation whose first language was Urdu and who had been through the school system in India were, as a result, literate in Gujarati.

Pilot

The pilot survey was conducted in the London Borough of Haringey and had four main objectives. These were to assess how people received the questionnaire in different contexts; how effective the wording and structure of the questionnaire was; what constituted the most successful strategies for getting individuals to co-operate and complete a questionnaire; and to gauge how many responses within what kind of timescale should be expected so that a realistic target of completed questionnaires could be established for the actual survey. The pilot proved to be a crucial stage of the preliminary work, in that it caused the final structure of the questionnaire to be drastically re-thought. I do not comment here on every detail that was altered but summarise the main ways in which the pilot informed and changed the final design and administration of the questionnaire. A more complete picture of individual

¹⁸¹Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema, (London, BFI, 1994), p14

revisions to the wording and structure of the questionnaire can be ascertained by comparing the first draft (Appendix A) with the final version (Appendix C).

Distribution strategies and reception of questionnaire

There are a variety of strategies for administering questionnaire surveys, the main ones being by post, telephone or through face to face contact. Whilst nothing had been definitely ruled out at the pilot stage, the length of the questionnaire always made a postal or telephone administered survey unlikely. The financial implications of these methods made them still less viable options. Equally, in order to ensure significant numbers of responses I knew I had to identify an approach by means of which I could address and distribute the questionnaire to groups of potential respondents as opposed to individuals. This was the reason behind my focus on community organisations, groups and classes aimed at sections of the South Asian population.

Five community groups were identified through which the pilot questionnaire could be distributed and were selected on the understanding that between them they would provide access to a good cross-section of the South Asian population in terms of age, gender, language and ethnicity¹⁸². A brief description of each group selected is given in Appendix B. The five groups differed hugely in their size and type of activity which meant I had to adjust my technique for making a request, in the first instance for people's attention, and ultimately their contribution to the study by completing a questionnaire. For example, one of the groups was a once weekly educational class and therefore it was inappropriate to ask individuals to interrupt their lesson to complete a questionnaire. What I was able to do was provide a brief outline of the research and its aims and leave questionnaires with the class tutor who agreed to take responsibility for their distribution and collection. A similar approach was taken with a luncheon club. A third group provided a drop-in service for young people and I was advised by the project leader to speak to individuals on a one to one basis and try and get them to fill in questionnaires within the session because they were unlikely to bring them back if given the option of taking them away. These three groups where either I or the group co-ordinator, or a combination of the two, had spent some time

¹⁸²The ethnicity of the South Asian population in Haringey, and indeed across London, tended to be differentiated in accordance with the different national regions of the Indian sub-continent as broken down in question 4b of Appendix A.

encouraging individuals to complete questionnaires proved to be the most productive in terms of numbers of responses obtained. Between these three groups a total of 61 questionnaires were distributed of which 27 were returned.

The other two groups generated far fewer responses. A main reason for this was that members of both groups were spread across a variety of activities, such as sports, drama and language classes, which were going on at the same time. The co-ordinator of one, himself engaged in a badminton match, had very little time to speak to me even though he had had prior notice of my visit. With both groups the only real opportunity for approaching members was when they were taking a break from their activities when many, understandably, did not want to be bothered by talk about an audience survey. The co-ordinators of both groups indicated it would be best for me to distribute as many questionnaires as possible and return in two weeks time to collect any completed questionnaires. Out of a total of 31 questionnaires handed out 4 were completed and returned to me a fortnight later. When compared with the first two groups, where it was equally inappropriate to expect questionnaires to be completed within sessions, but where the rate of return was far higher, it could be deduced that the enthusiasm and support of project workers/co-ordinators towards the research was central to getting individuals to co-operate.

The pilot underlined the importance of face to face contact with both group co-ordinators and group members in generating responses. As a consequence what little chance there had been of administering the questionnaire via post or telephone had now been completely ruled out. Other options for accessing respondents were suggested and considered in the post pilot phase such as via cinemas and clubs that attracted large numbers of South Asians. But this was not a questionnaire that could be completed in a queue. Nor was it realistic to expect people 'out for the night' to give up twenty or thirty minutes of their evening. Thus, although they could not always guarantee people's willingness to participate, community organisations still comprised the most economical avenue for reaching and eliciting responses from significant numbers of people. One avenue that was incorporated successfully in the actual survey was distributing questionnaires via videoshops specialising in Indian films. Arrangements were made with two outlets to approach customers and offer

them a free video in return for a completed questionnaire. The idea of doing the same in mainstream videoshops such as Blockbusters was considered but not pursued because of the potential for friction arising from the fact that only customers of South Asian descent would be approached.

The pilot was relatively successful in obtaining a research sample reflective of various age, sex and ethnic groupings. Out of thirty questionnaires returned 40% were completed by males and 60% by females. The age breakdown had adequate representation from the 14-25 (37%), 26-40 (33%) and 41-55 (23%) age-groups. One disappointment in this regard was the absence of any responses from the 55+ age group. I had hoped that the luncheon club would provide access to this age group as I had been informed that significant numbers of its regular users were pensioners. Unfortunately I was not involved in the distribution of the questionnaires to members of this group and so could not pinpoint the exact reasons for their absence in the pilot survey. However, reflecting back on the pre-pilot discussions I found this age group to be the most co-operative and so was confident that with better planning and more emphasis on face to face contact that they would be represented in the actual survey. The ethnic composition of the sample was inclusive of the main South Asian groups and included Indians (70%), Pakistanis (10%) and Bangladeshis (10%). That the number of respondents of Indian background far outweighed the other two groups was in part intentional. The reason for this was that in order to make the most of the limited translation and interpreting resources, I had preselected areas for the actual survey where the South Asian population was predominantly of Indian background, and so it made sense to target the same group for the pilot.

In as much as the pilot constituted a trial run of the actual survey, albeit on a smaller scale, it provided an opportunity to consider the purpose and effectiveness of the questionnaire from very different perspectives than previously. The pre-pilot discussions had been re-assuring in that individuals expressed an interest and willingness to participate in the study without much, if any, need to convince them of the value of the research or the importance of their input. By contrast, the rate of return of questionnaires during the pilot was about one third of all questionnaires handed out.

What I found, particularly from my visit to the drop-in centre for young people, was that the buzz and banter of a discussion was replaced by silence and intense concentration of filling in a questionnaire. Of course there was nothing to stop people from conversing with each other whilst they completed questionnaires but the format generally drew them to sit and think individually and in silence. This imposed a very different dynamic to their session which normally would be full of chatter and interaction. In the pre-pilot stage the noise of a discussion had tended to attract people to participate. In the pilot the silence of a questionnaire had made people curious enough to enquire what the person(s) sitting in silence were doing but less likely to volunteer their own input. This was an important observation in alerting me to be more conservative about my expectations of people's willingness to participate. It also had the effect of widening my approach in the actual survey to include interview administered questionnaires.

Rate of return and target for actual survey

Across the five groups 94 questionnaires were handed out and 31 were returned of which one was virtually blank and therefore was discarded from the coding process. There was likely to be some variation in this figure in the actual survey, but on the basis of the pilot I estimated that I could expect on average about nine completed questionnaires per group visited. Taking into consideration time and resources a minimum target of 200 completed questionnaires was set for the full survey whilst always leaving open the possibility of increasing this figure further. In fact in the period after the pilot debrief, with the help of my supervisor, a small budget was secured to contract student help in the distribution and coding of the questionnaires. The effect was that 300+ responses were obtained - a 50% increase in the initial target figure.

Clarifying and narrowing the focus

I have already indicated how doing a trial run of the questionnaire critically positioned me in very different ways than any of the stages preceding the pilot. In this regard another particularly key moment was the process of coding and analysing the raw data. Whilst 30 responses were not enough to make any predictions, the act of

coding every response and making statistical comparisons drew me, perhaps for the first time, to seriously evaluate the contribution and worth of each question to my research objectives.

As I have already noted, the overall objective of the survey was to identify trends in consumption of films on videotape amongst South Asian audiences which would provide a case study for contesting theories of 'cultural hybridity'. So far as the questionnaire was concerned its specific purpose was to gather information to establish patterns of consumption of films on videotape i.e. what kind of films on videotape individuals liked to watch; what factors influenced their choice of films on videotape; who did they prefer to watch films on videotape with; how other domestic technologies affected their consumption of films on videotape and so on. The pilot did not diminish any of these issues but brought to light the need to assess the way in which each had been incorporated into the questionnaire as well as their precise significance and weight for the overall study. For example, upon coding and printing the statistics I questioned how exactly knowing an individual's particular use of the computer (see Appendix A question 17) added to my understanding of their use of films on videotape. Similarly, what use would it be to know which radio stations or terrestrial programmes respondents liked or disliked (see Appendix A questions 15, 47 and 48). For sure I may have been able to establish various correlations or associations, such as, 'people who liked science fiction films regularly watched science programmes such as *Tomorrow's World*', or that, 'people who watched a lot of films on videotape also regularly listened to radio stations'. The point is that each of the various sections and questions in the first draft of the questionnaire could somewhere, somehow be shown to be related to the broader picture of the use of films on videotape. But then so could other aspects of people's lives such as engagement with various domestic activities, demands of paid work and so on.

In sum, on completion of the pilot I realised that the initial draft had lacked a specific focus and had been driven by an eagerness to accommodate the position of many 'new' audience scholars that the use of media and media technologies should not be investigated in isolation, but contextualised and measured in relation to the variety of technologies within the home. Crucially, in using the various technologies as a

framework for structuring the pilot questionnaire I had compromised my ability to differentiate and make detailed comparisons of the trends in consumption of popular Indian and mainstream/Hollywood films on videotape. In hindsight this was misconceived in as much as the pre-pilot discussions had specifically highlighted these two culturally distinctive categories of films as occupying an invariably significant place in many South Asian households. In the process of re-drafting I focused on structuring the questionnaire such that I would be able to compare and contrast the patterns of consumption of popular Indian and mainstream/Hollywood films on videotape. This was achieved quite simply by using the two categories of films to structure the main body of the questionnaire. A revised version of the cable/satellite section was also included. The reason for this was that there had been strong indications emerging from the pre-pilot discussions that cable/satellite television had had a significant impact on the use of films on videotape, particularly Indian films. Other sections relating to terrestrial television, cinema, radio and newspapers, that had formed part of the pilot questionnaire, were removed altogether.

Wording and structure of questionnaire

The feedback received from respondents participating in the pilot suggested that the wording of the questionnaire had been easy to follow. However, one criticism relayed often was that the questionnaire took too long to fill in. Rethinking its structure and focus as described above reduced the average time taken to complete the questionnaire by a third, to twenty minutes.

One significant aspect of re-wording was to the term 'mainstream/ Hollywood'. Whilst no one participating in the pilot queried or sought clarification of the term 'mainstream/Hollywood', in discussion with supervisors the question was raised as to whether some individuals may be constrained by this category to think only of those films made in Hollywood. It was important to note that although Hollywood texts predominated mainstream British film culture they did not occupy it exclusively. Thus, in the final draft 'mainstream/Hollywood' was replaced with 'popular/mainstream'.

Translation

20% of the responses returned utilised the Gujarati translation. If the same percentage was achieved in the actual survey the number of non English responses was likely to total about 60 questionnaires. Considering that the cost of one translation was about £400 I did not feel able to justify the translation of the questionnaire into a second language. As such I proceeded with only the Gujarati translation for the actual survey.

Coding

The coding of the raw data was done on SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows and was done in two stages. The first was to develop and input a code book. This essentially involved attaching a numerical code to each possible answer. There were three different types of questions each requiring varying degrees of thought when identifying the best coding frame. Coding was easiest where the questions required the respondent to tick only one box. In such cases coding of the question merely involved assigning a numerical value to each box. Question 2 is one such example and was coded in the following manner:

2. Gender: Male (1)
 Female (2)

Questions which invited the respondent to tick more than one box had to be coded in such a way that each box became a separate question. For example question 40 appeared in the questionnaire as:

40. What kind of films do you tend to watch at the cinema?

(please tick all that apply)

- Indian films
mainstream/Hollywood films
Other(s)

This question had to be entered into the code book as three separate questions. The following code for 'Indian films' was repeated for the other two categories i.e. 'mainstream/Hollywood' and 'other(s)':

What kind of films do you tend to watch at the cinema? (Indian films)

Yes (1)

No (2)

This method of coding was employed for a substantial number of questions as the invitation to tick more than one box was a frequent feature in the questionnaire. The open ended question was the third type of question to be coded. Only a small number of such questions were included in the questionnaire. Few actually elicited enough responses to make post-coding feasible and therefore some were not entered in the code book. This non-response to open questions was unsurprising in that as Oppenheim notes, 'when it comes to an enumeration of items of behaviour, such as newspapers or magazines read the previous week or programmes watched on television, the open type of question produces a lower yield than the prompt-list kind. This is partly due to temporary forgetfulness and partly to the fact that some papers or programmes have low memorability'¹⁸³.

Open questions that were entered into the code book were often coded using different categories than those offered by the respondents. For example, question 53 asked respondents to write down their favourite films. Instead of coding the name of every single film given in response to this question (which would have provided over 20 categories) I decided it was more useful to code the question in the following way:

Which are your favourite type of films:

Indian films	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)
Mainstream / Hollywood films	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)
Indian and mainstream / Hollywood films	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
other(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)

Another useful facility offered by SPSS is the ability to record and distinguish missing values within the responses to each question. Missing values appeared in the pilot survey in instances where a respondent failed to provide an answer to a question

¹⁸³ Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, (London, Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1992), p114

or where the question did not apply to the individual concerned. During the coding of the raw data, where a question was 'not applicable' to the respondent this was coded as a 98, and where there was clearly 'no response' this was given the numerical value 99. The significance of recording missing values was that it made it possible to interpret and present the data in accordance with the number of responses to a particular question as opposed to the number of individuals participating in the survey as a whole.

The second stage of the coding was to go through each questionnaire and enter the code appropriate for each answer. Once this was complete the calculation of responses to all questions was done by SPSS which provided both numerical and percentage breakdowns. It was also possible to print bivariate and multivariate analyses i.e. the crosstabulation of two or more questions.

My discussion of the various stages leading up to the actual survey has perhaps been overly descriptive but I think also necessary for the purposes of improving future studies and also for identifying the scope and limitations of this one. More specifically, as I argue in more detail in chapter 7, my experience and use of the quantitative survey has comprised a more complex process than that conveyed in many 'new' audience critiques which associate statistical data gathering techniques as 'number crunching exercises' that have little to contribute to our understanding of human behaviour¹⁸⁴. Here it is useful to point out that, during the preliminary stages of research design I have had to address directly some of the central arguments integral to 'new' audience criticism of quantitative data such as collapsing the social background of individuals into particular categories. In doing so my attention has been drawn to the fact that many of the obstacles and difficulties encountered in quantitative research designs are not so easily overcome by simply adopting qualitative techniques. Stanfield encapsulates the point with respect to categorising research subjects when he states, 'researchers, no matter their methodological orientations, have no way of distinguishing whether an informant's expressed racial identification is a response to objectified categorisation derived from learning

¹⁸⁴see for example David Morley, 'Towards an Ethnography of the Television Audience', in his book Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992), pp173-197

experiences in a race-saturated society or merely a subjective admission'¹⁸⁵. I draw on these observations in chapter 7 where I argue for a more serious consideration and (re)integration of quantitative techniques for the purposes of understanding modern cultural relations.

The process of administering the survey and the effectiveness of its findings are now evaluated. The section should be read in conjunction with Appendix D which provides graphical illustrations of much of the data referred to. The visual graphs are to help balance the reliance on statistics which alone in numerical form may prove too tedious to follow.

Survey Administration

Student assistance

The distribution of the questionnaire was spread over a three month period between July and September 1995. It was undertaken by myself and two undergraduate students recruited from the Media and Cultural Studies course at Middlesex University. Both students were female. One was white English and the other was of Mauritius background¹⁸⁶. Both had completed the course module titled 'Media, Texts and Audiences' which had required them to design and undertake an empirical study involving a small number of individuals with a view to investigating their use/views of a particular medium or text. As such they came to the survey with some background knowledge of many of the debates dominating the field of academic audience research.

In the initial stages of questionnaire distribution I intentionally arranged appointments with larger community organisations which the three of us visited together. Towards the end as the students gained in experience and confidence they attended some of the smaller groups on their own. Whilst I had sole responsibility for identifying groups and arranging appointments, in terms of actual contact with the respondents our roles

Ien Ang, 'Wanted: Audiences', in *Remote Control*, edited by E. Seiter et al, (London, Routledge, 1989), pp96-115

¹⁸⁵ 'Epistemological Considerations', in *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, edited by J.H. Stanfield & R. M. Dennis, (London, Sage, 1993), p18

¹⁸⁶ The students were Launa Kennett and Nova Arnachellum.

were the same. Each of us approached individuals to tell them about the research and ask them if they would be willing to complete a questionnaire. Respondents were given the choice of completing questionnaires themselves or allowing us to interview them using the exact questions and structure of the questionnaire.

Throughout the period of distribution I was in regular contact with the students who had been asked to note and report any dynamics or experiences relating either to respondents' reactions towards them, or respondents' answers to the questions. I refer to some of these points in subsequent sections but on the whole there was nothing to indicate that the experience of administering the questionnaire was significantly different between the three of us.

As well as being involved in the distribution of the questionnaire the students also assisted in coding and inputting the responses onto SPSS. The contribution of the students was highly significant in terms of the number of responses elicited. Prior to securing funds to contract their help I had set a target of 200 completed questionnaires. The students' input helped raise this number in the actual survey to a total of 316 responses, an increase of just over 50%.

Methods of questionnaire distribution

The London Boroughs of Newham and Kingston-Upon-Thames were selected for the distribution of the questionnaire. They were chosen first and foremost for the fact that their respective South Asian populations were pre-dominantly of Indian background whose main language other than English was Gujarati. This was important in order to maximise the benefit of having a Gujarati translation available. The other main criteria for choosing the areas of Newham and Kingston were their contrasting statuses as a poor inner London area, in the case of Newham, and a more prosperous outer London area, in the case of Kingston. Lists of community organisations were obtained from the respective local authorities and used as a basis for identifying groups catering for sections of the South Asian population. As co-ordinators were contacted and meetings arranged, some offered to "put in a good word" with other groups with whom they were familiar. Sometimes these groups fell in neighbouring boroughs which did not prevent me from following up the lead. My reason for this

was that many of the groups within Newham and Kingston attracted individuals who travelled from outside of the respective borough and so the research was never strictly about South Asian residents within these areas. In fact as Figure 1 in Appendix D illustrates the final sample was made up of individuals residing across a number of London boroughs with a handful from outside of the metropolis. The latter were either on holiday or were visiting friends/relatives at the time of the survey. Most respondents were residents of Newham (32.1%) and Kingston (15.7%), or neighbouring areas such as Ilford (10.6%), Barking (6.8%), Tooting (3.4%) and Croydon (4.8%).

Unlike the pilot, community organisations were not the only mode for accessing respondents. There were three additional avenues through which individuals were invited to take part in the survey. The first was via video outlets specialising in Indian films. Arrangements were made with two owners to allow one of the students to spend half a day in each of their shops. The agreement was that any customers willing to complete a questionnaire would be offered a video rent free. The charge for rental would be reimbursed to the owner from the project budget. Another avenue for locating respondents was via the canteens of two universities and one sixth form college. Students were simply approached during their lunch/refreshment break and asked if they had time to fill in a questionnaire. Finally, some responses were obtained via the 'snowball technique'. This was where respondents or colleagues volunteered to pass on questionnaires to their relative(s), friend(s), or fellow worker(s).

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the proportion of responses obtained from the various approaches thus described. Just over half the respondents (50.9%) were recruited from community/religious organisations, about 20% from educational institutions, a further 15% from video outlets specialising in Indian films and the remainder through the snowball technique.

Sample bias

The type of venues through which the questionnaire was distributed meant that the majority of respondents had regular contact with their families and/or the local South Asian population. Even in places like colleges and universities groups of South Asian

students were approached rather than individuals. It is possible to identify two specific implications of this on the idiosyncrasies of the sample and the dynamics in which the data was gathered.

Firstly, a direct consequence of adopting the methods of sample recruitment described above was that the survey was not so representative of individuals who may not have close or regular contact with their families or sections of the South Asian population. This does not invalidate the findings as such. But it is imperative that any interpretations, or conclusions, drawn from the data are affirmed within the context that this was a survey that was overwhelmingly reliant on those social and cultural networks which specifically connect individuals who have migrated, or whose parents/elders have migrated from the Indian sub-continent to Britain. In this regard, the respective networks might be described as being 'ethnic' specific in that their memberships are overwhelmingly composed of individuals of South Asian origin/ancestry. At the same time these 'ethnic' specific networks are undoubtedly heterogeneous in character. They are simultaneously differentiated and cross-cut by language, religion, cultural practice or place of birth.

A second form of bias arose from the spaces and dynamics in which the questionnaire was completed. The groups through which respondents were accessed comprised spaces which were overwhelmingly biased in their focus on aspects of South Asian cultures. It is likely that had respondents been completing questionnaires in other culturally distinct spaces, or, in the company of other racially diverse peer groups, then their responses to the questions may have been different. This is illustrated by an observation made by one of the students whilst distributing questionnaires in Indian videoshops. She noted how many respondents would be reminded of films from the posters and information on the walls of the shop. Whilst this may have triggered individuals to think of certain films, it is necessary to acknowledge that the visual material on the walls would be selective and therefore there may have been other films that they weren't stimulated to think about. For example, if the questionnaires were being completed in mainstream videoshops then their thoughts and responses may have leaned more towards popular/mainstream texts.

Sample profile

In arranging appointments with various community organisations I selected a combination of groups which would provide access to a good cross section of individuals with respect to sex and age. Figures 3 and 4 in Appendix D provide graphical breakdowns of how each of these variables were reflected in the final sample. In summary, there were approximately equal numbers of male and female respondents. With respect to age, the 16-19 age group was by far the largest group represented and comprised almost a quarter of the sample. Overall the representation was comparatively higher across the younger age ranges compared to the middle and older age groups. For instance, the first four categories which encompassed those aged 16-34 years commanded 62.5% of the sample. By comparison, the next seven age groups ranging from 35-65+ years constituted 37.5% of the sample. The implications of this variation simply means that making comparisons by age needs to be done with caution in that one category may constitute 71 responses whilst another may only consist of 16.

There was one overriding characteristic of the sample that was specifically created by the criteria for selecting particular areas and groups for accessing respondents. To maximise the use of translation/interpreting resources the questionnaire was purposely distributed through groups where Gujarati was a main dialect amongst the South Asian population. A consequence of this was that just over 70% of the sample were of Indian background, with smaller numbers of Pakistanis (10.9%), Bangladeshis (5.1%) and Sri Lankans (5.1%) (see Figure 5). Having said that, the 1991 census indicates that the majority of the South Asian population residing in England are of Indian background (i.e. 50.8% compared to 27.7% Pakistanis, 9.7% Bangladeshis and 11.7% Asian Other)¹⁸⁷. Many are now second or third generation and were born here¹⁸⁸ and this was also the case amongst the respondents. Figure 6 provides a summary of

¹⁸⁷I have referenced the 1991 figures as these were the closest in date to the survey. The 2001 census suggests that in percentage terms the number of individuals indicating Indian as their ethnic background has decreased slightly in relation to the other South Asian groupings. The latest statistics indicate that of the entire South Asian population in England 45.7% are Indian; 31.4% are Pakistani; 12.2% are Bangladeshi; and 10.6% are Other Asian (source: National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk).

¹⁸⁸Data from the 1991 census indicates that of the South Asian population in England, 41.1% were born in England; 19.8% in India; 12.9% in Pakistan; 6.2% in Bangladesh; 9.7% in East Africa, and 10.2% in other countries.

respondents' place of birth and indicates that 35% were born in England, 27.3% in India and 17.4% in East Africa with smaller numbers born in Bangladesh (4.5%), Pakistan (6.1%) and Sri Lanka (4.8%).

The three most common religious groupings across the South Asian population settled in Britain are Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs¹⁸⁹ and this was also reflected amongst the respondents participating in the survey. The precise spread of religious groupings is illustrated in Figure 7 and indicates that about half the sample were Hindu (50.5%), just under a quarter were Muslim (23.2%) and a similar percentage were Sikh (21.5%).

Figures 8 and 9 present the type of accommodation and household structure in which respondents lived. This detail is useful in providing some indication of the degree of dependence/independence of respondents in terms of domestic space and relations. The vast majority lived with their families (82.6%) in owner occupied accommodation (74.4%). The most common household structure was the nuclear family (52.9%, of which 4.2% were single parent nuclear families) followed by the three generational extended family (18.5%). Only 4.2% actually lived on their own. Most respondents were either married (44.9%) or single (42.1%). Another point worthy of note is that although most individuals taking part in the survey fell into the 'low' to 'no' personal income brackets (see Figure 10), the households in which they lived fell more evenly between low to upper middle income brackets (see Figure 11). This would suggest that whilst many respondents themselves had little personal income at their disposal, they tended to live in households that were relatively independent in that they were privately owned with a level of income deemed 'comfortable' as opposed to on the 'poverty line'. In the context of the survey, income levels are noteworthy in that they have a significant bearing on the ability of households to invest in media technologies and leisure activities in general, such as going to the movies and renting videotapes.

¹⁸⁹The 1991 census did not include a question on religion but figures from the 2001 census indicate that of the entire population of England 3.10% are Muslim, 1.11% are Hindu, and 0.67% are Sikh (source: National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk). These figures, however, include individuals of non South Asian descent.

In summary, the above profile suggests that the survey sample was predominantly made up of individuals from the younger to middle age ranges, of Indian background, living within a nuclear family structure in owner occupied accommodation.

Data analysis

In addition to the responses to each individual question, bivariate and multivariate tabulations open up endless possibilities for presenting and discussing the data from any questionnaire survey. However, from a sample the size of my own survey, conducting multivariate and to a lesser extent bivariate analyses is in many instances negligible. This is because the more questions that are crosstabulated the more thinly the responses become spread across the various categories and so making it difficult to make meaningful comparisons. For this reason the presentation of the findings in the next chapter mainly constitutes a univariate analyses of the data with some bivariate evaluations. The process of selecting data for discussion is guided by three overall concerns which also structure the content of chapter 4 and so are identified in its introduction.

Chapter 4

South Asian Audiences' Tastes and Usage of Films on Videotape

With its focus on measuring the use of such culturally distinct texts as Indian and popular/mainstream films, the audience survey is presented in this chapter as a case study for evaluating the critical worth of those aspects of theories of 'cultural hybridity' which relate to the more commonly debated themes of 'cultural pluralism' and 'cultural fusion'. The focus and time period of the survey, which examines usage of films on videotape in 1995, inevitably positions the findings as being slightly out of date with current audience trends in 2005 where everyday conversations are likely to encompass more recent technologies such as DVDs and new media channels such as B4U. At the same time the survey provides an insight into an aspect of the contemporary phenomenon of audience activity. In that sense the study is presented as a historically and socially specific context for contesting modern dynamics of cultural interaction and negotiation.

There are three broad areas around which the presentation of the survey findings is organised in this chapter. They are: firstly, access to technologies for viewing films in the home; secondly, trends in usage and perceptions of Indian and popular/mainstream films; and thirdly, the contexts of consumption of the two categories of film with specific reference to the process and patterns of obtaining videotapes and the company in which they are likely to be watched.

In the first section, my concern is to establish a link between cultural identity and trends in the type and variety of media technologies available in South Asian households in the mid 1990s. To do this, I compare my own survey findings with national trends around the same time period in order to identify similarities and differences in 'ownership' and 'use' of media technologies in South Asian households compared to households in the United Kingdom as a whole. The findings suggest how relatively 'new' media technologies (such as VCRs, cable and satellite) have proven to be more popular amongst South Asians compared to the indigenous population because they provide access to culturally specific texts not available through

terrestrial provision. The power being exercised by South Asians to increase their choices and access to culturally diverse media is specifically linked to Hall's 'new' logic of capital to chart how the mechanisms of advanced capitalism have empowered previously marginalised voices. This increased visible presence of marginalised cultures has created a more fragmented national culture.

The second section begins to address the issue of what the 'newly' empowered voices of the margins actually convey about the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' and the possibilities for racially transgressive cultural change. The section starts by presenting the overall trends in usage of popular/mainstream and Indian films as indicative of a bicultural film culture, in that there is a simultaneous engagement of both categories of films amongst significant numbers of respondents. Using Gilroy's conception of 'double consciousness' I identify the overall patterns as significant cultural markers which, on the one hand, challenge contemporary 'race' ideologies that perceive cultures as homogenous entities, and on the other, endorse the central argument of hybridity theorists that modern cultural formations need to be understood as an outcome of the *creolisation* of multiple cultural sources. I then shift my focus from examining general trends to internal group differences which revolve around age and place of birth. The findings are seen to signify inter-generational distinctions manifested in the overwhelming tendency amongst the older generation to limit their diet of consumption to Indian films whilst their children/grandchildren readily interact with both popular/mainstream and Indian films. The contrasting generational trends are seen to bring into question the precise connection between 'cultural hybridity' and the 'migrant condition' in that it is not first generation migrants but their British born offspring who are more likely to interact with and combine distinct cultural forms. In clarifying the link between the 'migrant condition' and 'cultural hybridity' I challenge Gillespie's interpretation of similar findings emerging from her study as a conflict between 'tradition' (older generation) and 'modernity' (younger generation). Instead I emphasise the need to read both the bicultural trends of younger generations and the monocultural trends of their parents/grandparents as representative of the complex and contradictory ways in which the process of hybridisation unfolds. To develop this more complex understanding of the process of hybridisation I apply Brah's distinction between vertical and horizontal interpretations of inter-generational differences to

illustrate that the dynamics of ‘cultural hybridity’ and their impact on cultural change do not unfold in a neat linear sequence but need to be understood within social and historically specific contexts. To accommodate this point whilst assessing each of the generational trends for their capacity to institute racially transgressive change, I position the inter-generational differences in film consumption within a non-linear conception of time and space which is drawn from the work of Gilroy and Rattansi. Here the discussion identifies that the transgressive qualities of ‘cultural hybridity’ do not simply emanate from the ability to intermix two (or more) distinct cultural forms, but the ability to negotiate multiple cultural locations in a manner that is disruptive to the ‘dominant order’. In this regard Gilroy’s notion of the ‘frog’s perspective’ is usefully deployed to elucidate that the intermixing of popular/mainstream and Indian films amongst second and third generation South Asians is unable to generate modes of being and seeing that threaten dominant/subordinate relations because at the point of intermixing, of comparing and contrasting, there is a tendency to concede a superior status to the aesthetic quality of popular/mainstream films. The second section uses these findings on inter-generational differences to conclude that ‘cultural hybridity’ never carries any guarantees but that its ability to transform racial and cultural inequalities is, to reference Brah’s assertion, contextually contingent.

The third section aims to provide a more complex insight into how racial and cultural hierarchies become inflected and circumvented within the film culture of South Asians in Britain. It takes as its focus the differing ways of accessing videotapes and the company in which they are most likely to be watched. My analysis begins by establishing respondents’ use of culturally distinct outlets for obtaining the two categories of films on videotape, i.e. Indian films are obtained from videoshops specialising in Indian films and popular/mainstream films are obtained from mainstream videoshops such as Blockbusters. The regular use of these cultural outlets is traced in their everyday conversations and identified as a focus for comparison and contrast through which they draw out the strengths and limitations of the respective merchandise. These observations are linked to Brah’s description of the manifestation of binaries within everyday negotiations of diaspora. My examination of the binary comparison of videoshops highlights an arrangement of the dynamics of power that is similar to respondents’ perceptions of the aesthetic quality of the two groups of texts

in that once again the strengths of popular/mainstream films are foregrounded and become the focus for identifying where change might occur. The implications of this for racially transgressive change are vividly illustrated by tracing how actual changes between the two film industries mirror the binary comparisons engaged by respondents. The result being a gradual 'homogenisation of cultures of interaction' where the processes of production and consumption of Indian films become increasingly like the processes of production and consumption of popular/mainstream films. This scenario is interpreted as encapsulating Gilroy's suggestion that modern black cultures and subjectivities are best understood as commentaries upon the 'antinomies of modernity' where the creation of 'new' meanings and 'new' cultural outlooks is undermined, not so much by the erosion of culturally distinct forms but by the 'homogenisation of cultures of interaction'. This assertion that the dynamics of interaction determine the meanings drawn from specific cultural forms is developed further in the final subsection where I apply a revised conception of Bourdieu's notion of 'group habitus' to describe how for many respondents choosing between popular/mainstream and Indian films often means choosing between one 'group habitus' (e.g. immediate family; indigenous population) over another. Significantly, such choices are made in an atmosphere of conflict through the hierarchical arrangement of the two categories of films. I relate these dynamics as an example of, to use Hall's terms, a 'war of manoeuvre' within the 'war of position'. This proposes that the film culture of many South Asians may be inclusive of both Indian and popular/mainstream films, but as these two categories of films compete for the same time and space choices are made in a fashion that is consistent with the process of racialisation.

Before proceeding with the first of the three sections outlined above I should point out that the survey data presented in this chapter are accompanied by graphical illustrations which are copied into the text.

Access to Domestic Technologies for Viewing Feature Films

This section describes the availability of domestic media technologies within respondents' homes and compares this data with national trends in order to help establish the significance of cultural background in shaping respondents' interaction

with media and media technologies. In measuring the number and type of media technologies available in respondents' homes the questionnaire focused attention on those items most commonly used to watch feature films. This included the television, video recorder and cable/satellite television.

The results presented in Figure 12 indicate that the vast majority of respondents taking part in the survey had access to a television set (98.7%) and video recorder (94.3%) in their own homes. Most respondents lived in households with more than one TV (59.1%), and a smaller but substantial number with more than one VCR (28.4%). With regards cable and satellite services, 26.9% of the survey sample lived in households with one or more television sets connected to cable, and 29.7% to satellite¹⁹⁰.

Figure 12: No. of TV sets, VCRs and cable/satellite connections in household

	TV set(s)	VCR(s)	cable box(es)	satellite connection(s)
none	1.3%	5.7%	73.1%	70.3%
One	39.6%	65.9%	19.9%	21.8%
Two	32.9%	21.2%	6.0%	7.0%
three	16.1%	6.1%	0.6%	0.6%
four	7.3%	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%
more than four	2.8%	0.4%	0.1%	0%
<i>valid cases</i>	316	316	316	316

Respondents with cable/satellite television were also asked to indicate whether their households purchased any of the channels that had a separate subscription fee and which regularly screened popular/mainstream or Indian films. In this regard as Figure 13 suggests, the most popular additional channel purchased was Zee TV (formerly TV Asia) with 77.5% of cable/satellite subscribers in reception of this service, followed by Sky Movies (46.3%), The Movie Channel (35.5%), Sky Movies Gold (32.3%) and The Home Video Channel (15%).

¹⁹⁰It should be noted that some households were connected to both cable and satellite. As a whole, the proportion of respondents living in households with cable and/or satellite was 38.9%.

Figure 13: Subscription to additional channels with regular screenings of Indian or popular/mainstream films

	Sky Movies	Sky Movies Gold	The Movie Channel	Home Video Channel	Zee TV	Other
%tage of respondents with...	46.3%	32.3%	35.5%	15%	77.5%	13.2%
<i>valid cases</i>	121	121	121	120	120	121

By contrasting the survey data thus presented with national trends it is possible to identify how the pattern of ownership and use of domestic media technologies in South Asian households in Britain compares with the population as a whole. To steer the discussion in this direction I want to introduce findings from a report by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) titled Television: Ethnic Minorities' Views¹⁹¹.

The ITC report presents data collated in 1994 and was part of the ITC's annually commissioned survey examining public attitudes to television. There are huge differences between my own survey and the ITC study, both in terms of the research designs as well as their respective aims and objectives. I do not wish to elaborate on these except to point out that the central objective of the ITC survey was to 'bring out the similarities and differences in attitudes to television of the majority population and members of ethnic minorities'¹⁹². The suitability of the ITC study for the purposes of comparison here is marked by three features. Firstly, it is the only comparative analysis of media ownership by ethnic group to be conducted within a year or so of my own survey¹⁹³. I should point out that in its subsequent annual surveys the ITC has not undertaken to examine trends in media ownership by ethnic group, though in any

¹⁹¹ITC Research Publication, 1996

¹⁹²ibid., p1

¹⁹³It is appropriate to mention that another study conducted in the same year as my own, which is referred to in the next subsection, is not chosen for a detailed comparison because its main focus on terrestrial television usage in Asian households in Leicester does not provide the ethnic comparisons being sought for the discussion here. see James Halloran, Arvind Bhatt and Peggy Gray, Ethnic Minorities and Television, (University of Leicester, Report for Channel Four, 1995)

case the rapidly changing status and introduction of additional media technologies (e.g. DVD's) means that studies conducted around the same time are the most suitable for comparative purposes. Secondly, the main sample for the ITC survey was selected to be representative of the 16+ population of United Kingdom (with respect to age, sex, social class and employment status). As such the ITC findings can be used as a basis for establishing the patterns of media ownership emerging from my survey in relation to national trends. Thirdly, in addition to its main sample the ITC study included two separate samples representative of United Kingdom's Asian and African Caribbean populations. In this regard data from my survey can be contrasted with the ITC findings on Asian households to identify the generalisability of the conclusions drawn from my own study.

Reading the ITC findings alongside data from my own survey highlights two distinct cultural trends between South Asian households and households in the United Kingdom as a whole. These trends relate to the domestic 'ownership' of media technologies on the one hand, and the 'use' of media technologies on the other. I summarise these trends before discussing how they support Hall's connection between the 'new' logic of capital and the increasingly visible identities of the 'margins'.

Distinct cultural trends in 'ownership' and 'use' of domestic media technologies

The ITC figures for the proportion of Asian households with at least one TV set (100%) and VCR (92%) are not too dissimilar to the findings from my own survey. Comparing the statistics with the main sample the ITC report found that Asian homes were equipped in much the same way as the general population, except markedly more had a VCR (92% compared to 83% of the population as a whole) and fewer had a compact disc player. In addition, a higher proportion of Asian homes had cable/satellite television than the main sample. With respect to trends in subscription to additional channels regularly screening popular/mainstream or Indian films, once again, the ITC report paints a similar picture of its Asian sample to that presented in Figure 13 (although there is some variation in the exact percentages). Of the Asian respondents participating in the ITC survey and living in households with

cable/satellite television, 73% subscribed to Zee TV, 39% to Sky Movies, 34% to The Movie Channel, 29% to Sky Movies Gold and 7% to The Home Video Channel¹⁹⁴.

The other main point of interest to this discussion raised by the ITC research is that whilst most respondents from all three samples used their VCRs to both time-shift programmes and watch commercially recorded films, there were huge variations between the groups in terms of the frequency with which these activities were engaged. For example, more than twice as many Asians (50%) as main sample members (24%) used their VCRs to watch commercially recorded films at least once a week. With regards time-shifting of programmes the picture is reversed. Almost three times as many individuals from the main sample (58%) used their VCRs two or more times a week for this purpose than members of the Asian sample (19%). Another study conducted around 1995 examining perceptions and patterns of television usage in South Asian households in Leicester supports these findings. The Leicester study also reports that Asian respondents were much more likely to use the video recorder for watching hired films, most notably Indian films, than to record and time-shift terrestrial programmes¹⁹⁵.

From the above discussion it would appear that the ITC findings and my own survey data depict a similar pattern in terms of the proportion of South Asian households equipped with TV sets and VCRs. Both studies also established Zee TV as by far the most popularly subscribed to additional movie channel on cable/satellite television. One disparity between the two studies that is worth noting is the percentage of South Asian households subscribing to cable/satellite television. With respect to this the figures from my survey are notably higher than those provided by the ITC study. In my survey the proportion of households in reception of cable television was 26.9% and those with satellite 29.9%, compared to 9% and 16% respectively in the ITC study. This variation may in part be explained by differences in geographical

¹⁹⁴Television: Ethnic Minorities' Views, (ITC Research Publication, 1996), pp3-6

¹⁹⁵see James Halloran, Arvind Bhatt and Peggy Gray, Ethnic Minorities and Television, (University of Leicester, Report for Channel Four, 1995). It is useful to point out that this study presents a pattern of ownership of media technologies in South Asian homes that is generally consistent with the trends identified by my own survey and that of the ITC - the Leicester study found that 99.9% respondents lived in households with one or more television sets; 90% with video facilities, and about a fifth with cable/satellite television.

dispersion of the respondents participating in the two studies. The sample for the ITC research was selected from across the United Kingdom where variations in access to cable/satellite are much wider than those areas in London where respondents for my survey were recruited¹⁹⁶. These differences aside, two fundamental observations emerge from reading my own findings alongside data provided by the ITC.

The first is that the proportion of households with VCRs and cable/satellite was notably higher amongst South Asians living in the United Kingdom than across the population as a whole. The second is that the most popular use of VCRs and cable/satellite services amongst South Asians was to access information and programmes specific to South Asian culture, such as Zee TV and popular Indian films. Thus, as the ITC report suggests, the pattern of VCR use and reception of cable/satellite is such that South Asian households 'may be significantly less satisfied with terrestrial television than the majority population'¹⁹⁷. At the same time the particular patterns of 'ownership' and 'use' of media technologies relays a degree of cultural capital and cultural power being exercised by South Asian audiences in that they are actively appropriating media texts and technologies to satisfy culturally specific tastes not provided for by mainstream media. This empowerment of South Asian tastes can be specifically connected to the proliferation of consumer choices that have arisen from the deregulation of the marketplace. In this regard, it is possible to highlight Hall's conception of the 'new' logic of capital and its predisposition to satisfy rather than suppress cultural differences (see p67) as a central impetus behind the emergence of the kind of culturally distinct trends in the 'ownership' and 'use' of media technologies described above.

The 'new' logic of capital and the empowerment of 'migrant' cultures

¹⁹⁶It should also be noted that the availability and patterns of consumption of media technologies are constantly changing and so the data presented is very specific to the mid 1990's. For example, since my survey additional channels specific to South Asian culture, such as B4U, have been made available on cable/satellite networks and have proved particularly popular amongst South Asian audiences. Another recent development, of direct relevance to the focus of my own investigation into the consumption of films on videotape, is the arrival of DVD's which will have impacted upon the home video market. I've already noted that since its 1994 survey the ITC has not provided a breakdown of ownership of media technologies by ethnic group for subsequent annual surveys. However, for the population as a whole the latest figures provided by the ITC suggest that whilst VCR ownership has stabilised, ownership of all other items measured by the ITC survey continued to rise (including personal computer, satellite dish, video games) see The Public's View 2002, (An ITC / BSC Research Publication), p14

As Hall himself points out, one of the main consequences of Margaret Thatcher's reign and her free market approach to the economy was an explosion of new forms of cultural communication¹⁹⁸. With the opening up of media markets to cable and satellite networks, terrestrial television ceased to monopolise domestic consumption of visual media. The biggest consumers of the additional services appear to be 'migrant' populations in as much as they have expressed a disproportionately 'greater interest and willingness to invest in new media services'¹⁹⁹ than their indigenous counterparts. And as the above discussion would suggest, the greater popularity of new media services amongst migrant populations appears to be related to the greater accessibility they provide to culturally diverse programmes. Thus, in the context of production and consumption of domestic media technologies the 'new' logic of capital has decentred dominant cultural discourses in the way described by Hall, by encouraging 'the emergence of new subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new regions, new communities, hitherto excluded from the major forms of cultural representation'²⁰⁰. This moment of 'the decentred cultural empowerment of the margins' is identified by Hall as a threat to homogenous national identities in that the newly empowered voices of the margins begin to fragment the dominant cultural landscape.

With reference to media provision the cultural empowerment of South Asian cultures has fragmented the national cultural landscape in a number of ways. For example, until recently, information on Indian films could only be accessed through South Asian specific media. In the current climate, where capitalist enterprise is becoming increasingly responsive to distinct cultural tastes and styles, there appears to be a gradual but definite incorporation of listings and reviews of Indian films alongside popular/mainstream films by sections of the mainstream British media, such as

¹⁹⁷ *Television: Ethnic Minorities' Views*, (ITC Research Publication, 1996), pp 15-16

¹⁹⁸ 'The Local and the Global', in *Culture, Globalisation and the World System*, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp27-28

¹⁹⁹ *Television: Ethnic Minorities' Views*, (ITC Research Publication, 1996), p16

²⁰⁰ 'The Local and the Global', in *Culture, Globalisation and the World System*, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), p34

weekly entertainment publications like Time Out and The Guide²⁰¹. Individual films like *Asoka* have also begun to feature on the long established BBC film review programme now hosted by Jonathan Ross²⁰². In addition, the narrative content and style of Indian films are the central basis for the most recent Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Bombay Dreams* to be staged in London's West End at The Apollo.

This visible co-existence of distinct cultures challenges 'common sense' racist ideologies which propose that in order for 'migrants' to live in harmony with the indigenous population they should simply assimilate the dominant culture and way of life. In this instance not only can South Asians in Britain be seen to be asserting their own tastes and styles, but in doing so they have helped reshape the national culture which is increasingly cosmopolitan in outlook. In the next section I expand upon how the patterns of film consumption emerging from the survey challenge 'common sense' and 'assimilationist' conceptions of cultural interaction (see pp152-154). To conclude this section it is necessary to comment on how the culturally fragmented patterns of media consumption amongst South Asians might be interpreted as evidence of racially transgressive cultural change. Ang problematises this point well when she states that the proliferation in choice and availability of diverse media and texts has certainly led to more 'active' involvement of audiences. However, she adds, the manifestation of 'active' audiences 'does not guarantee any critical purchase, let alone resistance or subversion'²⁰³. To assess the issue of racially transgressive cultural change with reference to trends in consumption of popular/mainstream and Indian

²⁰¹In recent years there has also been a noticeable growth in textbook literature on 'Bollywood' originating from writers and publishing houses in both India and Britain. The content has ranged from guides and reference books, historical overviews of the industry, its role in creating a national identity and sense of community, relationships and dynamics 'behind the scenes', as well as detailed narration and analysis of individual films and personal experiences. See for example, Gulzar, Govind Nihalani and Saibal Chatterjee, eds, Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema, (New Delhi, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, 2003); Ashok Banker, Bollywood the Pocket Essentials, (London, Pocket Essentials, 2001); Lalit Mohan Joshi, Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema, (London, Dakini Books Ltd, 2002); Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, Cinema India, (London, Reaktion Books, 2002); Vijay Mishra, Bollywood Cinema. Temples of Desire, (London, Routledge, 2002); Nasreen Munni Kabir, Bollywood. The India Cinema Story, (London, Pan MacMillan Ltd, 2001); Gayatri Chatterjee, Mother India, (London, BFI, 2002); Rachel Dwyer, Yash Chopra, (London, BFI, 2002); Chris England, Balham to Bollywood, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2002); Justine Hardy, Bollywood Boy, (London, John Murray Publishers Ltd, 2002).

²⁰²*Asoka* was reviewed by Jonathan Ross on the *Film 2001* programme broadcast on 25th October 2001 on BBC1.

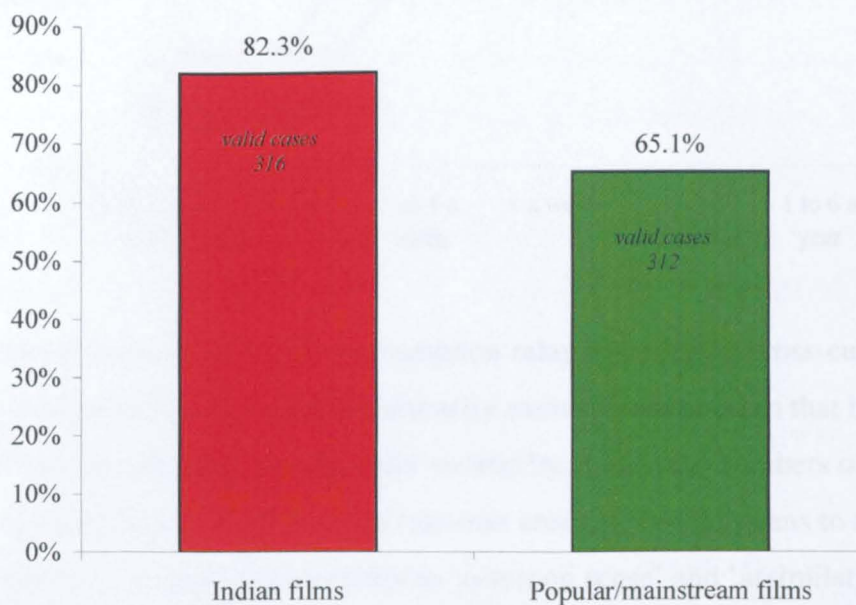
²⁰³Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996), p14

films on videotape amongst South Asians, it is necessary to establish the cultural status enjoyed by the texts in question and whether they are being appropriated in a manner that disrupts prevailing social and cultural hierarchies. The next section begins to address this point by examining the popularity of Indian and popular/mainstream films in terms of the frequency with which the two categories of films were watched and the critical worth accorded to each.

Usage and Perceptions of Popular/Mainstream and Indian Films

The survey data suggests that both Indian and popular/mainstream films were watched by significant numbers of respondents. A percentage breakdown of the related statistics is presented in Figure 14 and indicates that a larger proportion of respondents (82.3%) watched Indian films than did popular/mainstream films (65.1%).

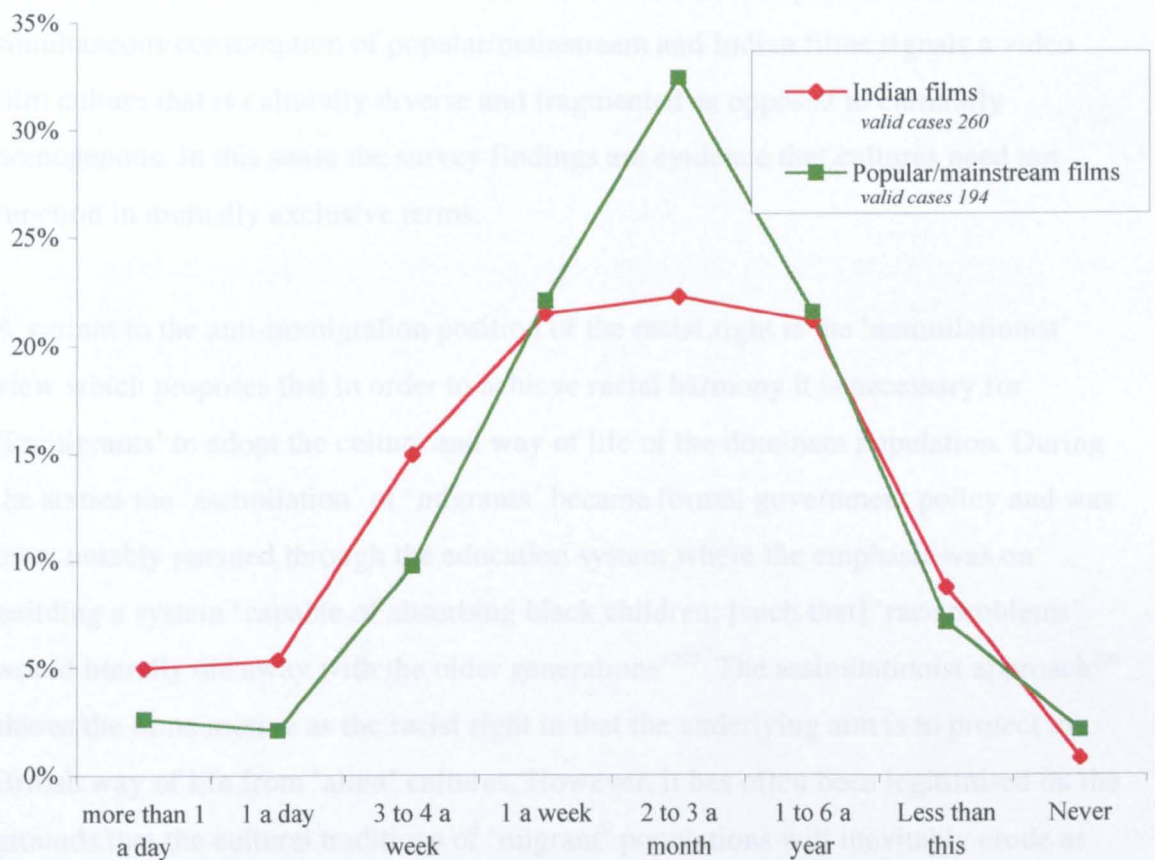
Figure 14: % tage of sample watching Indian and popular/mainstream films on videotape



In terms of the frequency with which the different texts were watched, the scatter diagram in Figure 15 indicates that both popular/mainstream and Indian films were most likely to be watched 2 to 3 times a month. And, once again, a comparative

analysis of the data denotes that Indian films were watched more frequently than popular/mainstream films. Of those respondents who watched Indian films 46.9% watched one or more a week compared to 36.6% for popular/mainstream films.

Figure 15: Frequency of watching Indian and popular/mainstream films



These overall patterns of consumption relay a process of cross-cultural interaction, as opposed to self-contained or mutually exclusive cultures, in that both categories of films on videotape are regularly viewed by significant numbers of individuals. As has already been pointed out, this response amongst South Asians to their encounter with different cultures runs contrary to 'common sense' and 'assimilationist' conceptions of the dynamics of identity formation which understand cultures and 'races' as homogeneously constituted. It is appropriate to establish this argument more clearly as it substantiates the underlying theoretical position shared by hybridity theorists that modern identities signal the 'loss of a stable sense of self' in that they are not bounded or defined by a homogeneously constituted racial or cultural identity.

Bicultural trends not mutually exclusive cultures

As various commentators have outlined²⁰⁴, in Britain since the late 1960's 'common sense' ideologies of 'race', nation and identity have formed the basis for policies of anti-immigration and racial purity pursued by racist right groups such as the BNP and National Front. Such ideologies perceive racial groups as distinct cultural entities characterised by mutually exclusive ways of life which make the 'clash of cultures', or racial conflict, inevitable within societies with multiracial populations. The simultaneous consumption of popular/mainstream and Indian films signals a video film culture that is culturally diverse and fragmented as opposed to culturally homogenous. In this sense the survey findings are evidence that cultures need not function in mutually exclusive terms.

A variant to the anti-immigration position of the racist right is the 'assimilationist' view which proposes that in order to achieve racial harmony it is necessary for 'immigrants' to adopt the culture and way of life of the dominant population. During the sixties the 'assimilation' of 'migrants' became formal government policy and was most notably pursued through the education system where the emphasis was on building a system 'capable of absorbing black children; [such that] 'race problems' would literally die away with the older generations'²⁰⁵. The assimilationist approach²⁰⁶ shares the same motive as the racist right in that the underlying aim is to protect the British way of life from 'alien' cultures. However, it has often been legitimised on the grounds that the cultural traditions of 'migrant' populations will inevitably erode as their children prefer and adopt the culture of the 'host' nation which is seen to afford

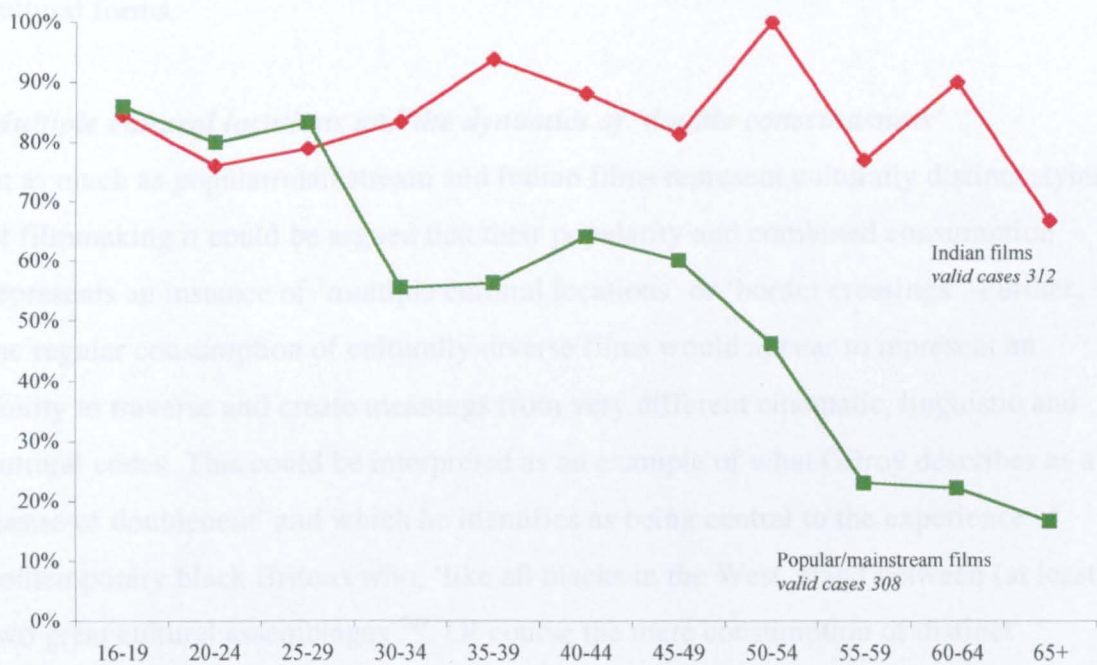
²⁰⁴see Martin Barker, *The New Racism*, (London, Junction Books, 1981)
Errol Lawrence, 'Just Plain Common Sense: the 'roots' of racism', in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1982), pp47-94
Phil Cohen, 'The Perversions of Inheritance', in *Multi-Racist Britain*, edited by P. Cohen & H. Bains, (London, MacMillan, 1988), pp9-118
John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain*, (London, MacMillan, 1989)
Floya Anthias and Nira-Yuval Davis, *Racialised Boundaries*, (London, Routledge, 1992)

²⁰⁵Hazel Carby, 'Schooling in Babylon', in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1982), p185

²⁰⁶Though no longer formal government policy the principles of 'assimilation' continue to inform and direct government procedures for dealing with immigrants to Britain. For example, in February 2002 the home secretary David Blunkett announced compulsory 'citizenship tests' for immigrants wanting to become UK citizens. Included in the tests are an exam to assess English language proficiency as well as a formal oath or 'citizen's pledge' affirming that the individual will embrace 'British' laws and customs.

more freedom and autonomy and therefore 'superior'²⁰⁷. This perspective is also strongly refuted by the survey findings which suggest that it is becoming increasingly commonplace amongst South Asians in Britain to interact with, and incorporate into their daily lives, aspects of both 'British' and 'South Asian' culture²⁰⁸. The supporting data for this is presented in Figure 16 which provides a breakdown of the consumption of Indian and popular/mainstream films by age group. Amongst the 16-19 age group 84.5% watched Indian films and 85.9% watched popular/mainstream films. Thus, the film culture of large sections of South Asian youth cannot be described as exclusively 'British', nor exclusively 'South Asian', because it is equally inclusive of both popular films from the West and the Indian subcontinent.

Figure 16: %tage of sample watching Indian and popular/mainstream films on videotape by age group



²⁰⁷see Errol Lawrence, 'In the Abundance of Water the Fool is Thirsty', in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1982), pp95-142

²⁰⁸From his own research, Roger Ballard also argues that far from reflecting a process of cultural assimilation the emerging cultural trends amongst the South Asian population in Britain are reflective of bi- or multi-cultural competence. See Ballard's, 'The South Asian Presence in Britain and its Transnational Connections', in *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, edited by B. Parekh, H. Singh, and S. Vertovec, (London, Routledge, 2003), and *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, (London, C. Hurst and Co., 1994)

It should be noted from Figure 16 that across the age ranges there is a huge disparity in trends in consumption, and this is particularly so for popular/mainstream films which seemingly decline in popularity and usage amongst the older respondents. I return to examine these statistics when I broaden out discussion to consider the internal group differences embedded in the overall patterns of video usage amongst the respondents (see pp159-168). The overall patterns suggest that there is a definite shift towards a bicultural film culture amongst South Asians in Britain. This represents a significant cultural marker which can be indexed as an example to support the central assertion running through the work of hybridity theorists that modern experiences and processes of identity negotiation are racially and culturally fragmented. To illustrate this connection more clearly I want to interpret the bicultural patterns of film consumption in the context of Paul Gilroy's exploration of the concept of 'double consciousness' which describes the cultural outlooks of blacks settled in the West as an outcome of a process of interaction and mutation of distinct cultural forms.

Multiple cultural locations and the dynamics of 'double consciousness'

In as much as popular/mainstream and Indian films represent culturally distinct styles of filmmaking it could be argued that their popularity and combined consumption represents an instance of 'multiple cultural locations' or 'border crossings'. Further, the regular consumption of culturally diverse films would appear to represent an ability to traverse and create meanings from very different cinematic, linguistic and cultural codes. This could be interpreted as an example of what Gilroy describes as a 'sense of doubleness' and which he identifies as being central to the experience of contemporary black Britons who, 'like all blacks in the West, stand between (at least) two great cultural assemblages'²⁰⁹. Of course the mere consumption of distinct cultural forms does not in itself confirm an appreciation or understanding of culturally distinct perspectives. In this regard it is important to distinguish between the interaction with cultures as commodities or objects, from the interaction with cultures as different ways of being and seeing. This point is underscored later in this chapter when I note how the popularity of aspects of Indian culture, such as food and clothes, amongst indigenous British people has not resulted in a corresponding decline in

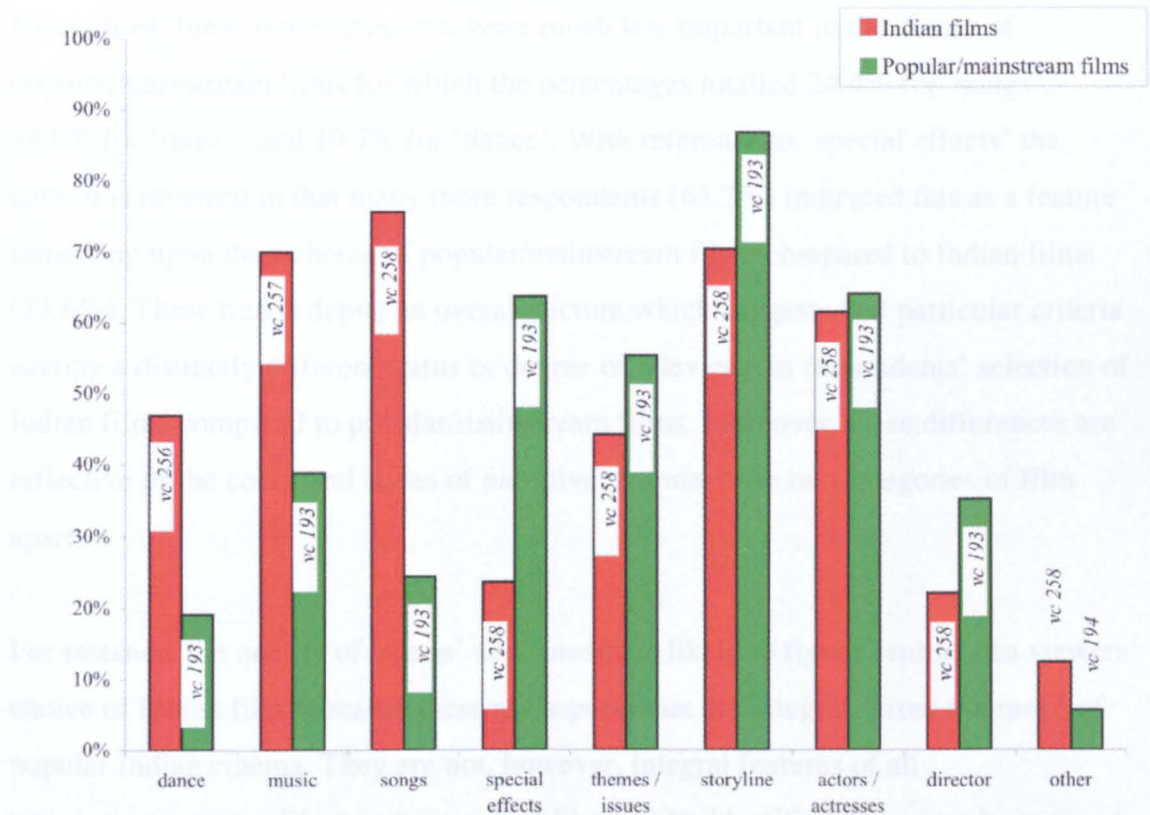
²⁰⁹*The Black Atlantic*, (London, Verso, 1993), p1

racist attitudes towards Indians (see p187). With reference to the survey it is possible to cite additional data to further support the claim that the bicultural patterns of film consumption amongst South Asians in Britain are illustrative of occupying 'a vantage point made up of distinct ways of being and seeing'. The data in question relates to factors influencing respondents' choice of films.

Combining information elicited from the pre-pilot and pilot stages, questions 9 and 21 (see Appendix C) asked respondents to indicate the features or aspects of films they were most likely to consider in deciding which films to watch. Their responses suggest both substantial similarities and differences in the factors most likely to influence their choice of popular/mainstream films compared to Indian films. I deal with the similarities first.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the similarities converged around those aspects recognised as essential ingredients in the making of all films and related to the categories 'themes/issues', 'storyline', 'actors/actresses' and 'director'. These categories carried differing levels of significance in respondents' choice of films on videotape but in relatively similar proportions for both popular/mainstream and Indian films. For example, as Figure 17 indicates, 'storyline' was indexed as an influential factor by 70.5% of viewers of Indian films and 87% of viewers of popular/mainstream films. The numbers identifying 'actors/actresses' as an influential factor on their choice of films were slightly less, though again the proportion for both categories of film were similar, i.e. 61.6% of viewers of Indian films and 64.2% of viewers of popular/mainstream films. The other two features were less of an influence on respondents' choice of texts, but once again this was in relatively similar proportions for both categories of film, i.e. 44.2% of viewers of Indian films indicated 'themes/issues' was an influential factor compared to 55.4% of viewers of popular/mainstream films. The 'director' was identified as an influential factor by 22.1% of viewers of Indian films compared to 35.2% of viewers of popular/mainstream films.

Figure 17: Factors most likely to influence respondents' choice of film



The pattern of similarities in the factors identified by respondents as influencing their choice of popular/mainstream and Indian films is not so much a coincidence but corresponds with those attributes that are made most prominent across the production and marketing stages of all feature films. In that sense, and as is apparent from publicity posters for Indian and popular/mainstream films, whilst the role of the 'director' is essential to the production of both categories of films he/she does not often feature as prominently in the marketing of films as the main character(s) or genre/storyline. However, it would be a mistake to suggest that a wholly identical framework was being deployed by respondents to guide their choice and enjoyment of films regardless of their cultural specificity. For, alongside the similarities there were also huge disparities which are consistent with those characteristics regarded as the distinguishing hallmarks peculiar to the cultural styles of each category of film and relate to the features 'songs', 'music', 'dance' and 'special effects' which I now describe.

The percentage of respondents indicating 'songs', 'music' and 'dance' as being influential on their choice of Indian films were 75.6%, 70% and 46.9% respectively. By contrast, these same categories were much less important in the choice of popular/mainstream films for which the percentages totalled 24.4% for 'songs', 38.9% for 'music' and 19.2% for 'dance'. With reference to 'special effects' the pattern is reversed in that many more respondents (63.7%) indicated this as a feature impacting upon their choice of popular/mainstream films compared to Indian films (23.6%). These trends depict an overall picture which suggests that particular criteria occupy a distinctly different status or degree of relevance in respondents' selection of Indian films compared to popular/mainstream films. Moreover, these differences are reflective of the codes and styles of narrative that mark the two categories of film apart.

For instance, the quality of 'songs' and 'music' is likely to figure centrally in viewers' choice of Indian films because these are aspects that are integral across the range of popular Indian cinema. They are not, however, integral features of all popular/mainstream films and so are less likely to be identified by respondents as playing a pivotal role in their choice of those texts. Similarly, the quality of 'special effects' is a much more debated and valued feature of popular/mainstream films than Indian films and so is more likely to play a central role in attracting individuals to popular/mainstream texts. These findings are in no way at odds, rather they concur, with the link I'm trying to make here with Gilroy's observation of a sense of 'doubleness' that characterises the outlook of black Britons. In making this connection, what is important to note is that the respective categories of film are not only distinguishable by differences in language and regional focus (popular/mainstream films being dominated by American and European history/experiences and Indian films with that of the subcontinent), but also by their respective modes of storytelling, visual codes and narrative conventions. As such the two categories of films in question are one manifestation of culturally different ways of seeing and being. Crucially, the central assertion in Gilroy's exposition of the concept of 'double consciousness', of the emergence of 'bifocal' or 'bilingual' cultural realities, is reflected not just in the simultaneous usage of two culturally distinct texts but also in the respondents' appreciation of the different cultural

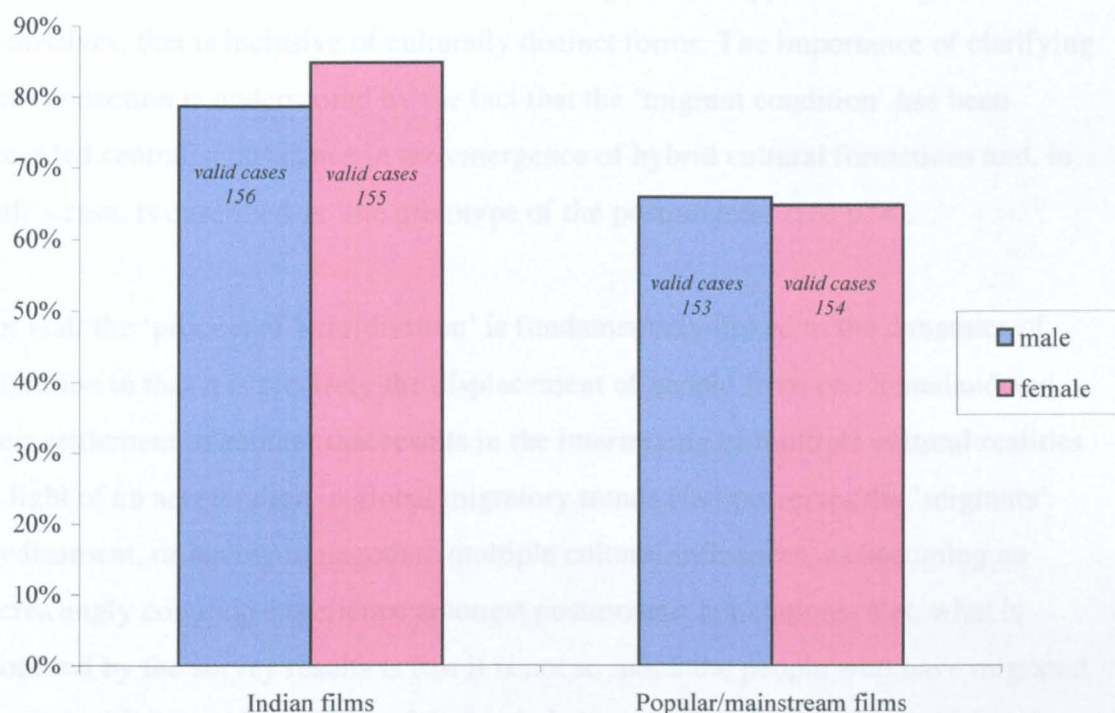
perspectives, or ways of being and seeing the world, represented by each category of film.

This particular link between the concept of 'double consciousness' and the overall trends in film consumption emerging from the survey endorses the shared emphasis of hybridity theorists on the need to approach modern identities as racially and culturally fragmented as opposed to racially and culturally bounded. Having said that, the processes of cultural fragmentation and mutation are intricately unpacked by hybridity theorists to draw attention to the complex and sometimes contradictory outcomes of 'cultural hybridity' with regards to overcoming dominant/subordinate relations. For example, Gilroy himself introduces the concept of 'frog's perspective' to describe the contradictory elements of 'double consciousness' which generate (amongst the oppressed) simultaneous feelings of 'hate' and 'love' for the privileged position of the oppressor (see pp96-97). In order to assess these more complex insights into the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' through an analysis of the survey findings, I now shift my focus from the overall trends to the internal group differences in usage of films on videotape amongst South Asians.

Given the statistical nature of the survey data the internal group differences in the patterns of film consumption amongst the respondents are best highlighted by crosstabulating the consumption of each category of film with specific axis of identification (i.e. sex, age, and birthplace). In this regard there were no notable differences between the numbers of males and females that watched the two categories of films. As Figure 18 illustrates the percentage of viewers of popular/mainstream films was virtually identical for both sexes, whilst the number of females watching Indian films was approximately 6% higher than males. The significance of this data is that it challenges dominant representations which position female migrants as less open, than male migrants, to 'outside' cultural influences because of their confinement to the home through patriarchal structures. The relatively high and similar percentages of male and female respondents watching Indian and popular/mainstream films suggests that interaction with different cultures cuts across gender divisions in that the everyday realities of South Asian women in

Britain are just as likely as South Asian men to be fragmented by multiple cultural influences.

Figure 18: % tage of sample watching Indian and popular/mainstream films by sex



Although, no notable statistical differences were revealed in the patterns of film consumption by sex, crosstabulating the patterns of consumption by age and place of birth highlighted significant distinctions across the sample. In offering an interpretation of these distinctions I introduce and assess the value of other concepts interwoven into the work of hybridity theorists beginning with the ‘migrant condition’.

Rereading the ‘migrant condition’ through an analysis of patterns of film consumption by age and place of birth

A breakdown of the trends in consumption of films on videotape by age group was noted earlier and interpreted in relation to overall trends. I now return to the data presented in Figure 16 to reflect on some of the acute differences across the age groups. Overall the use of Indian films remains relatively high for all the age groups

whereas the use of popular/mainstream films declines sharply as age increases. Amongst respondents aged 65+, 66.7% watched Indian films compared to 16.7% for popular/mainstream films. This contrasts with the 16-19 age group where the percentage was consistently high for both Indian (84.5%) and popular/mainstream films (85.9%). These generational differences draw into question the precise connection between the 'migrant condition' and the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' in that it is the film culture of the children of migrants, as opposed to migrants themselves, that is inclusive of culturally distinct forms. The importance of clarifying this connection is underscored by the fact that the 'migrant condition' has been accorded central significance in the emergence of hybrid cultural formations and, in Hall's case, is described as 'the prototype of the postmodern' (see p74).

For Hall the 'process of hybridisation' is fundamentally linked to the dynamics of migration in that it is precisely the displacement of people from one homeland and their settlement in another that results in the intermixing of multiple cultural realities. In light of an acceleration in global migratory trends Hall perceives the 'migrants' predicament, of having to negotiate multiple cultural influences, as becoming an increasingly common experience amongst postmodern populations. Yet, what is proposed by the survey results is that it is not so much the people who have migrated but their children, who have lived their whole lives in Britain, that display a readiness and ability to be more directly engaged with the culturally distinct forms that surround them. This distinction is emphasised further by the link between the place of birth of respondents and their propensity to watch both Indian and popular/mainstream films. The relevant data is presented in Figure 19 and suggests that of those respondents born in England significantly high proportions watched both Indian films (73.4%) and popular/mainstream films (82%). By contrast, of the respondents who were born in India the percentage watching Indian films (85%) was 41% higher than popular/mainstream films (44%). Similarly, of those born in East Africa the difference is 25% in favour of Indian films. The number of valid cases for the other three birth places, of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, are too few to be able to make meaningful comparisons. But even within these less representative categories Sri Lanka is the only one where the percentage of respondents watching Indian films

is lower than those watching popular/mainstream films and even then the difference is only 7%.

Figure 19: %tage of sample that watch Indian and popular/mainstream films by place of birth

	England	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	East Africa	Other
Indian films	73.4%	100%	85%	84%	93%	85%	93%
<i>valid cases</i>	109	14	85	19	15	54	15
popular/ mainstream films	82%	57%	44%	47%	100%	60%	73%
<i>valid cases</i>	108	14	84	19	14	53	15

Some may be inclined to interpret the crosstabulations of trends in film consumption by age and place of birth as confirmation of how elders are less open to cultural change whilst their children are much more embracing of the cultural intermixing implied by such concepts as ‘double consciousness’, ‘cultural fragmentation’, ‘the loss of a stable sense of self’ and so on. This is the argument projected by Gillespie in her assertion that, ‘the video cassette recorder (VCR) has been appropriated by many parents and grandparents (‘elders’) in Southall as a means of recreating cultural traditions in Britain; but, [...], their efforts are both subverted and ‘diverted’ by young people’²¹⁰. I challenge Gillespie’s assertion in more detail later when I argue for non-linear frameworks for assessing the process of cultural change (see pp164-175). Here it is important to note that Gillespie’s particular interpretation of inter-generational differences in patterns of media consumption amongst South Asians identifies the ‘migrant’ as someone who is resistant to cultural change. This in effect renders the central connection between the ‘migrant condition’ and the emergence of hybrid cultural expressions as somewhat precarious. In response to the implications of Gillespie’s analogy I want to propose that a fundamental link between the ‘migrant condition’ and the ‘process of hybridisation’ needs to be maintained. However, such a connection requires more complex delineation than the image of a person, or group,

²¹⁰ *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*, (London, Routledge, 1995), p78

moving from one homeland to settle in another and in the process readily combining and fusing a variety of cultural codes and styles. The consequences of ignoring this complexity are summed up by Ashwani Sharma who, in criticising Iain Chambers' positioning of migrancy as a metaphor for *the* postmodern condition, argues that the migrant becomes undifferentiated, 'decontextualised out of her socio-economic and historical situation', which pacifies the threat of difference to 'the legitimacy of narratives of dominant white masculine bourgeois Western culture'²¹¹.

Reflecting on the survey findings, perhaps the most obvious way of retaining the changing significance of the 'migrant condition' to the 'process of hybridisation' is to position the different generations of South Asians as playing out necessary yet separate roles within the same process. In crude terms this would mean that the act of migration is undertaken by one generation who, by establishing a particular cultural lifestyle in another country fragment its cultural make up, whilst the actual negotiation of multiple cultural realities is promoted by the lifestyles of successive generations. However, I want to resist this line of interpretation and suggest that the defining feature of the 'migrant condition', as Hall envisages, of having to negotiate distinct ways of being and seeing holds true for both generations. In doing so, I am in effect asserting that the largely monocultural trends of film consumption amongst South Asian elders are as much an outcome of the 'process of hybridisation' as the bicultural trends of younger generations. Reading the 'migrant condition' in this way, of locating its significance in the cultural negotiations of both the younger and older generations, is crucial in order to get to grips with the uneven and contradictory outcomes of 'cultural hybridity' for the process of cultural change. This is a complex argument and I unpack it in three stages. These stages were outlined in the introduction to this chapter and involve firstly, applying Brah's distinction of horizontal and vertical comparisons of inter-generational differences; secondly, assessing the inter-generational differences for racially transgressive change within a non-linear framework of time and space; and thirdly, identifying the operation of the 'frog's perspective', as conceived by Gilroy, within the bicultural film culture of the younger respondents.

²¹¹'Sounds Oriental: The Impossibility of Theorising Asian Musical Cultures', in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*, edited by S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk & A. Sharma, (London, Zed Books, 1996), pp18-19

Distinguishing 'horizontal' from 'vertical' comparisons of inter-generational differences

In her study of modern diaspora formations, Brah notes how vastly different conclusions can be drawn from inter-generational differences depending on whether a vertical or horizontal comparison is preferred (see pp79-80). By way of illustration she distinguishes between 'age group' and 'generation'. She suggests that 'age group' is a category that delineates a vertical relationship between subjects at a specific stage of a lifecycle (e.g. adolescents and their middle-aged parents), whereas 'generation' is a unit of analysis articulating a horizontal relationship [...] which is indexed and calibrated in relation to large units of historical time'²¹². Thus, within the definition of 'age group', the differential patterns of usage of popular/mainstream films by age are likely to be construed as indicating young people's willingness to embrace cultural change, in contrast to elders' resistance to cultural change. What results is an oppositional inflection of generational differences, presenting a conflict between 'homogeneity versus diversity', or 'tradition versus modernity'. However, working within the definition of 'generation' demands that the same patterns of film consumption are positioned and interpreted within the social and cultural context peculiar to the generation to whom each trend relates.

It is not possible to provide a detailed insight here but the kinds of social and cultural dynamics that might separate and distinguish migrant experiences of 'British' society from that of their offspring are connected to a whole range of issues including language, relations with the indigenous population, disposable income and so on. For example, the status of 'British born' and 'British educated' has meant that many young South Asians have been integrated into the fabric of British society in a manner that has resulted in more direct contact with the indigenous population and mainstream 'British' culture. By comparison first generation migrants from the subcontinent have had a far more detached experience of 'British' culture in that not only were their childhood experiences grounded in an altogether different place, but their arrival in Britain was characterised by more overt racism denying them

²¹²Cartographies of Diaspora, (London, Routledge, 1996), p43

fundamental rights in employment and housing. This served to create a more distant encounter between first generation migrants and the indigenous population and their way of life.

Essentially, the meaning of 'generation' challenges the 'homogeneity versus diversity' dichotomy, by simply shifting the focus to more fundamental differences in the social profile between age groups. With respect to the survey, we might simply argue that popular/mainstream films have been more accessible and more integral to the experiences of young South Asians than their parents/grandparents. However, the more important observation to be made from inflecting a horizontal as opposed to vertical interpretation of inter-generational differences is that it emphasises the internal contradictions and constantly shifting power relations that characterise the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. In effect this means, as Brah observes, that it is not possible to have one model of diaspora, or hybridity, because actual experiences of diaspora unfold in complex and contradictory ways and are historically and socially specific.

To illustrate more clearly how vertical comparisons of generational differences oversimplify the dynamics and outcomes of 'cultural hybridity', whilst horizontal analyses provide a more complex insight into how the 'process of hybridisation' is experienced and negotiated I want to briefly return to Gillespie's study. Gillespie adopts a vertical analysis of the generational differences emerging from her study and thus provides a useful context for distinguishing and developing a horizontal interpretation of my own survey findings.

In the earlier reference to Gillespie's work the cultural outlook of South Asian elders was presented as fixed, resistant to change and concerned with the preservation of tradition. In Gillespie's schema, the apprehension of many qualities associated with 'cultural hybridity', such as 'a fragmented sense of self' and 'the fusion of cultures', are projected as relatively recent phenomena emerging from the cultural pronouncements of the younger generations. At the level of a more visible and open embracement of distinct cultural forms it is possible to comprehend the reasoning behind Gillespie's line of thought. For example, with reference to the results from my

own survey, the video film culture of older respondents compared to that of younger respondents can be presented as a shift from a static essentialist cultural location to a more hybrid one on the simple basis that the former is predominantly monocultural and the latter is bicultural. Gillespie's representation of this argument is made all the more convincing as she intricately weaves parents' use of the media with their investment in such 'outdated' systems as arranged marriage, kinship duty and a nostalgia for home, which she contrasts with young people's outlook for 'an open expansive sociability' as manifested in their engagement of the media as 'an entirely real 'escape' into a new social and communicative space, in which [they] can actively redefine their culture'²¹³.

Gillespie's argument not only presents cultural change in linear terms, but also situates young people's culturally fragmented location as embodying an instance of 'cultural hybridity' from which 'real' progressive change might emerge in the form of overcoming structures and traditions that are restrictive to individual choice and freedom. In depicting such a picture the cultural identities of South Asian elders are positioned as being external to the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' and stripped of the ability to contribute anything to the emergence of racially transgressive change. This is an overly simplistic understanding of the origins and manifestation of 'cultural hybridity'. It can be challenged by preferring a horizontal interpretation of generational differences which I develop by applying Gilroy and Rattansi's non-linear conceptions of time/space dynamics.

Assessing generational differences within a non-linear framework of time and space

As described in Chapter 2 both Gilroy and Rattansi emphasise that identities do not evolve in a neat linear sequence. Gilroy expands on this by (re)integrating into his understanding of diaspora formations the concepts of 'unity', 'authenticity' and 'tradition' which have tended to be regarded as signifying the opposite of the fragmented character of diaspora or 'hybrid' cultural formations. For Gilroy the respective concepts represent a theme of 'connectedness' that is defined by an interactive relationship between 'past' and 'present' (see pp97-100). If traces of the

²¹³Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p206

'past' can be found in the 'present' then it becomes difficult to conceive of time and space as evolving in a neat linear sequence where the 'present' signals a complete break from the 'past'. In a similar vein, Rattansi draws attention to the 'decentring' of 'subjects' and 'the social' highlighting how both represent an endless process of displacement and crosscutting of boundaries in that they are influenced by multiple cultural perspectives of the world. What results is an interweaving of 'old' and 'new' narratives which by definition undermines the linearity often associated with temporal and spatial dynamics (see pp103-105).

Gilroy and Rattansi's respective insights are consistent with a horizontal organisation of generational trends in that they demand that instead of a direct comparison or linear arrangement of inter-generational identities, it is more appropriate to examine each identity formation within its own historical and social context²¹⁴. Applying this framework to interpret the generational differences emerging from my survey discloses the 'seemingly' monocultural film culture amongst South Asian elders as playing a key role in fragmenting the cultural make-up of films shown in British cinemas. This can be briefly illustrated by tracking the origins of Indian films and the role played by first generation migrants in establishing the presence of Indian films within mainstream British culture.

The introduction of films as a leisure activity in India can be dated back to 7th July 1896 when the Lumiere Brothers' *Cinematographe* was shown at the Watson's Hotel in Bombay. This was succeeded by other imported shorts from Europe which played to packed houses. Three years after the screening of *Cinematographe*, H.S. Bhatvadekar became the first filmmaker indigenous to India to make short films. These were followed, in 1905, by the first Indian features made by J.F. Madan's Elphinstone Bioscope film Company of Calcutta²¹⁵. Since then, the growth in terms of

²¹⁴It is worth pointing out that a non-linear understanding of cultural difference and identity negotiation is central to Homi Bhabha's illustration of the transgressive possibilities opened up by the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. He writes, a 'disjunctive temporality is of the utmost importance for the politics of cultural difference' and is 'effective because it returns to displace the present' thereby providing a 'basis for non-ethnocentric, transcultural judgements' (*The Location of Culture*, (London, Routledge, 1994), p177). Bhabha specifically refers to the 'disjunctive temporality' as a 'time-lag' or 'temporal split'. see also Bhabha's essay 'Culture's in Between', in *Multicultural States*, edited by D. Bennett, (London, Routledge, 1998), pp29-36

²¹⁵Firoze Rangoonwalla, *A Pictorial History of Indian Cinema*, (London, Hamlyn, 1979)

turnover has been such that popular Indian cinema has come to be recognised as the largest in the world releasing on average two and a half feature films a day²¹⁶. The appearance of Indian films on British cinema screens can be traced back to the early 1950s as the main leisure activity shared by the first wave of post-war migrants. Due to the composition of the consumer market for Indian films, cinema screenings in Britain were confined to areas with a dense population of South Asians²¹⁷. The availability of the VCR in the seventies, and the more recent introduction of cable/satellite television, have drastically increased the accessibility of Indian films amongst its British audience. It is no longer necessary to travel to, or live in the vicinity of, particular cinemas in order to be part of the Indian film audience in Britain.

This brief chronology of the birth of Indian cinema and its presence in British society identifies the intermixing of Western and Indian cultures as predating the post-war migration of people from the Indian sub-continent. As such it adds some weight to the emphasis emerging from Gilroy's work that the historical significance of 'cultural hybridity' should not be located in the late twentieth century but at the inception of modernity marked by the encounter between coloniser and colonised (see pp90-93). These observations are worthy of more detailed consideration than I am able to do justice here because they highlight that a comprehensive insight into the changing character and significance of hybrid cultural formations would need to delve into the histories of centuries past. To return to my own focus on contemporary South Asian film cultures, the point I wish to stress from the preceding paragraph is that, the establishment of popular Indian film culture within British society can be overwhelmingly attributed to the unapologetic assertion of culturally distinct tastes by post-war South Asian migrants amidst an atmosphere of 'race' hate and disdain towards 'alien' cultures. Framed in this way we might emphasise the cultural resolve of South Asian elders who did not succumb to the 'dominant way of life' and in doing

²¹⁶Ashish Nandy, 'Indian Popular Cinema as a Slum's Eye View of Politics', in The Secret Politics of Our Desires, edited by A. Nandy, (London, Zed Books, 1998), p1

²¹⁷Ziauddin Sardar's autobiographical account touches on how, in the sixties, watching Indian films at the Scala in King's Cross or the Cameo Theatre in Walthamstow was a once weekly 'occasion' enjoyed by many families from the subcontinent. See his essay 'Dilip Kumar made me do it', in The Secret Politics of Our Desires, edited by A. Nandy, (London, Zed Books, 1998), pp19-91

so changed the cultural landscape of Britain forever. This particular interpretation of the monocultural pattern of film consumption amongst South Asian migrants and its impact on the 'dominant culture' enables a more precise understanding of firstly, the connection between the 'migrant condition' and 'cultural hybridity', and secondly, where our focus should be when assessing the transgressive qualities of the 'migrant condition' or indeed 'cultural hybridity'.

On the one hand it is the pivotal role played by the 'migrant condition' in the transportation of cultures that highlights its direct linkage to the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. For, it is precisely by making cultures mobile, by encouraging their movement across national borders, that the 'migrant condition', like the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity', brings about the possibility for 'old' and 'new' narratives to interweave. On the other hand, the connection between elders' monocultural consumption of films and the fragmentation of British culture stresses that the transgressive qualities of the 'migrant condition' or indeed 'cultural hybridity' does not in fact lie in the ability to operate within, or consume, culturally distinct forms. Rather it lies in the ability to negotiate an identity amidst a plurality of cultural influences in a manner that is disruptive of the 'dominant order'. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that the bicultural film culture of young people is unlikely to have emerged had their parents/grandparents not been so undeterred from asserting their own styles and cultural preferences.

There is an additional perhaps more important observation to be made from the survey which reinforces the argument that in locating the transgressive qualities of 'cultural hybridity' the focus should overwhelmingly be on the capacity to disrupt the 'dominant order' as opposed to the ability to intermix distinct cultures. In relation to this it is possible to cite evidence to suggest that, although bicultural in form, the critical evaluation of Indian and popular/mainstream films amongst young South Asians has perhaps not been so disruptive to Western feelings of cultural superiority. To develop this part of my argument I draw on Gilroy's reading of the 'frog's perspective' to describe the structure of interaction characterising the simultaneous usage of popular/mainstream and Indian films amongst younger generations of South Asians.

Negotiating 'cultural hybridity' from the 'frog's perspective'

Informal conversations during the distribution of the questionnaire indicated that amongst many young respondents who regularly watched both Indian and popular/mainstream films, there was a tendency to critically assess Indian films in more homogenous ways than popular/mainstream films. The latter were more likely to be criticised with reference to the genres and narratives specific to each individual text. By comparison, Indian films were more communally criticised with comments such as the 'storylines are all the same' and that 'the fighting and dance sequences are prolonged and unrealistic'. When attention was drawn to the fact that fantasy and unreal scenes were also integral to many of the popular/mainstream films that were identified as their favourite type of films (such as *Die Hard* and *Terminator*), respondents would comment that the latter were of a much higher standard and more believable. Gillespie's study also corroborates this tendency to describe Indian films as being inferior to popular/mainstream films. This is captured in a quote from an 18-year-old boy which is worth reproducing:

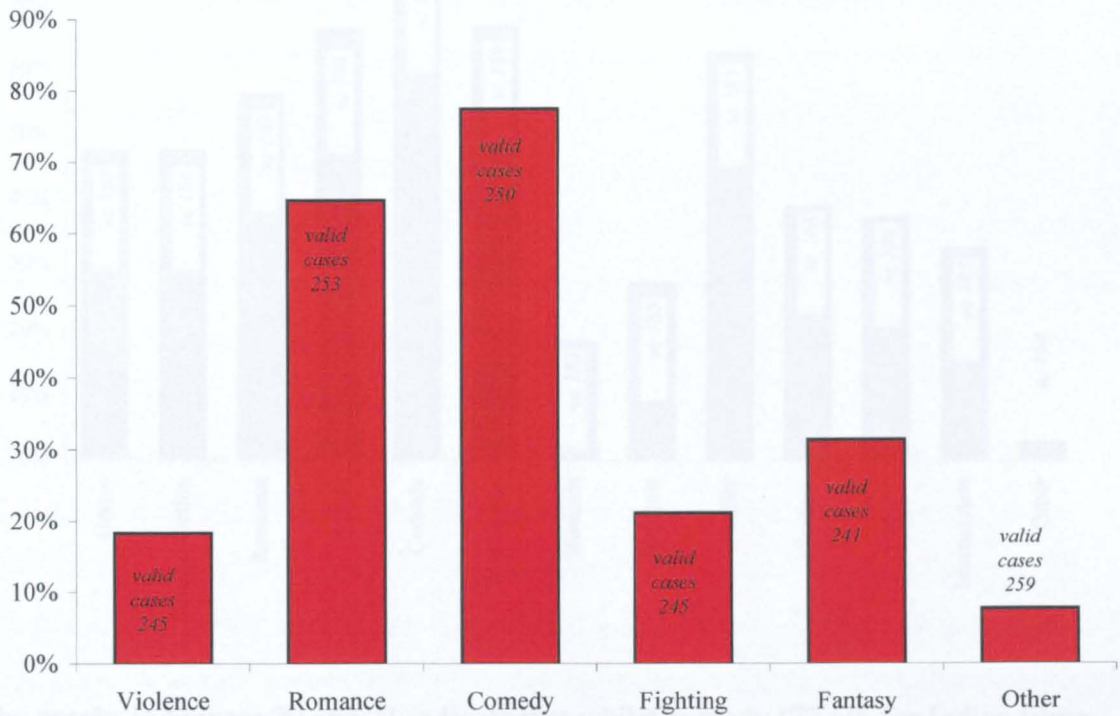
With the standard of media appreciation in the west it's hard to understand the sort of psyche that would appreciate these kinds of films again and again and again [...]. If you've been exposed to a film culture based on complex plots and detailed cinematography then you'd expect the same from the other culture and if it doesn't match up to that standard you don't want to see it anymore [...] it's like driving a Morris Minor after you've driven a Porsche.²¹⁸

These very open condemnations of Indian cinema have to be considered alongside data discussed earlier (see Figure 16) which presented young South Asians as equally avid consumers of both Indian and popular/mainstream films. In making sense of this contradictory data, one line of argument could be that it is perfectly plausible for respondents to find aspects such as fighting and violence aesthetically more pleasing in popular/mainstream films. Indeed such a theory appears to be supported by a comparison of respondents' identification of aspects they found most appealing in

²¹⁸Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p83

Indian films and their favourite genres of popular/mainstream films²¹⁹. The relevant survey findings are presented in Figures 20 and 21.

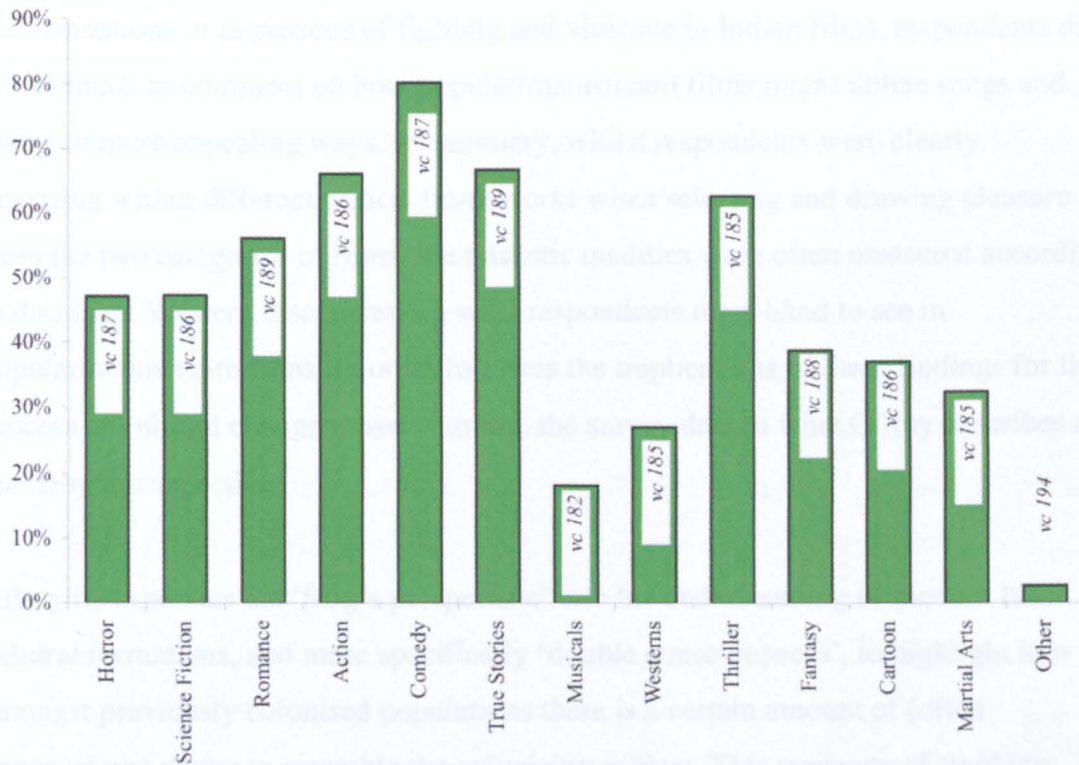
Figure 20: Elements respondents liked to see in Indian films



The graph also gives an insight into the elements that respondents liked to see in Indian films (77.2% for Indian films and 80.2% for popular/mainstream films) and romance (64.8% for Indian films and 56.1% for popular/mainstream films) constitute ingredients that a large majority of respondents like to see in both categories of film, the least appealing aspects of Indian films (i.e. violence and fighting (only 18.4% and 21.2% respectively liked to see these in Indian films) are a central feature of three of the top six most liked genres of popular/mainstream films (i.e. horror (47.1%); thriller (62.7%) and action (66.1%)). It is perhaps unsurprising that a clear preference for particular narrative conventions, or the manner in which specific themes are depicted by one category of films, becomes a reference point when commenting upon the aesthetic qualities of another category of films. However, of most significance to this discussion is the fact that the critical discourse being used by respondents to assess popular/mainstream films was often being used as a yardstick to evaluate the aesthetic success of Indian films but not vice versa. At no point did anyone evaluate popular/mainstream films within a framework that allowed them elements most likely to encourage respondents to watch Indian

²¹⁹In the previous chapter the difficulties of measuring consumption of Indian films by genre were highlighted and so it is not possible to make a like for like comparison using only genre categories.

Figure 21: Popular/mainstream genres respondents liked to watch



The graphs in Figures 20 and 21 indicate that whilst comedy (77.6% for Indian films and 80.2% for popular/mainstream films) and romance (64.8% for Indian films and 56.1% for popular/mainstream films) constitute ingredients that a large majority of respondents like to see in both categories of film, the least appealing aspects of Indian films i.e. violence and fighting (only 18.4% and 21.2 % respectively liked to see these in Indian films) are a central feature of three of the top six most liked genres of popular/mainstream films i.e. horror (47.1%); thriller (62.7%) and action (66.1%). It is perhaps unsurprising that a clear preference for particular narrative conventions, or the manner in which specific themes are depicted by one category of films, becomes a reference point when commenting upon the aesthetic qualities of another category of films. However, of most significance to this discussion is the fact that the critical discourse being used by respondents to assess popular/mainstream films was often being used as a yardstick to evaluate the aesthetic success of Indian films but not vice versa. At no point did anyone evaluate popular/mainstream films within a framework that privileged those elements most likely to encourage respondents to watch Indian films e.g. songs and music (see Figure 17). In fact, out of all the genre categories from

which respondents were asked to identify which popular/mainstream films they liked to watch, 'the musical' was identified by the lowest percentage of respondents (only 18.1% indicated that they liked to watch musicals). Yet, unlike the open condemnations of depictions of fighting and violence in Indian films, respondents did not so much as comment on how popular/mainstream films might utilise songs and music in more appealing ways. In summary, whilst respondents were clearly operating within different critical frameworks when selecting and drawing pleasure from the two categories of films, their artistic qualities were often measured according to dominant Western discourses, on what respondents most liked to see in popular/mainstream films. In order to assess the implications of these findings for the process of cultural change it useful to link the survey data to what Gilroy describes as the 'frog's perspective'.

Gilroy incorporates the 'frog's perspective' into his understanding of modern black cultural formations, and more specifically 'double consciousness', to highlight how amongst previously colonised populations there is a certain amount of (often unconscious) desire to resemble the colonising subject. This tendency of 'looking from below upward', argues Gilroy, is a fundamental obstacle to establishing more enduring relations of equality in that the struggles of the oppressed are simultaneously driven by the desire to emancipate oneself, and the desire to acquire the power and wealth of the privileged (see pp96-97). The condition of 'looking from below upward' is implicit in the bicultural patterns of film consumption amongst South Asian youth in that it is easy to ascertain from their comments what Indian cinema might valuably learn from popular/mainstream films. It is not, however, so easy to identify what popular/mainstream films might learn from Indian cinema. These findings confirm Gilroy's observation that modern black subjectivities have tended to reflect, rather than overthrow, the 'antinomies of modernity' and I develop this line of thought further in the next section (see pp182-187).

At this stage it is useful to summarise the direction in which I have taken the meaning of 'cultural hybridity' in this section. There are three points in particular that I want to highlight which support Brah's observation that it is a contextually contingent

question whether individual negotiations of 'difference' end up contributing towards more equal or subordinate relations.

Contextually contingent outcomes of the 'play of difference'

The first observation to be highlighted from the discussion in this section is the need to look beyond an open, or wholesale, embracement of distinct cultural forms as the defining feature of 'cultural hybridity'. My analysis of the inter-generational differences emerging from the survey demanded that the film cultures of both South Asian youth and their parents/grandparents be recognised as having evolved out of a 'sense of doubleness', amidst a position 'between two cultural assemblages'. The collision between the respective cultural influences has been very differently structured across the generations and with very different outcomes. Thus, rather than being seen to represent the difference between 'homogeneity' and 'diversity', or 'tradition' and 'modernity', the generational differences in film consumption might be more properly understood as the differing ways in which the different age groups have been introduced, positioned and have interacted with 'British' and 'South Asian' culture. And as the preceding discussion highlights it is not possible to accord one position as being more racially transgressive than the other. This links to the second point which relates to the 'play of difference' as it unfolds in individual negotiations of 'cultural hybridity'.

By reading the monocultural consumption of films amongst the older generation as providing an insight into the 'process of hybridisation' it has been possible to argue that just because someone is not seen to embrace more than one culture does not mean their lives are wholly uninfluenced by cultural differences, or are somehow external to the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. This assertion is illustrated more vividly and in more detail in chapter 6, in the context of young Muslim identities, where I argue that whilst respondents openly foreground Islam over all other axes of difference in defining their lifestyles, the meaning of 'Islam' itself and of being 'Muslim' have evolved through personal experiences and interaction with 'British', 'Asian' and 'Muslim' cultures (see pp246-273). With reference to the survey I simply assert that the monocultural consumption of films amongst elders can only be described as 'essentialist' if the focus is on identifying interaction or fusion of visibly distinct

cultural texts, as opposed to the negotiation and establishment of an Indian film culture amidst a political climate committed to 'cultural assimilation' and a social climate openly racist to anything non 'British'.

A third important observation to be drawn from this section is the non-linear dynamics and outcomes of 'cultural hybridity'. This is not to deny that certain cultural trends or styles succeed or precede others. However, what does need to be questioned is the positioning of more recent cultural expressions (such as the bicultural film culture of South Asian youth in Britain) as necessarily more progressive than those preceding them (such as the monocultural film culture of first generation South Asian migrants). This can only be avoided by foregrounding non-linear frameworks of time and space when understanding and comparing different cultural trends.

Taken together, the above three points identify the 'play of difference' as being central to the experiences of South Asians in Britain. Whether it be in relation to the monocultural trends characterising the film culture of first generation migrants or the bicultural trends of subsequent generations, 'cultural differences' have had to be confronted and negotiated. More importantly, the different implications for the process of racially transgressive cultural change that is posed by each of these trends confirms Brah's observation that it is always contextually specific as to how exactly particular negotiations of 'difference' impact upon social and cultural inequalities. The significance of this assertion for the broader concerns of this thesis, of assessing whether 'cultural hybridity' can be productively mobilised as a counterdiscourse to racialised forms of power and subordination, is crucial. For, it suggests that 'cultural hybridity' never carries any guarantees but always poses both negative and positive, or, progressive and regressive, outcomes for racial and cultural relations. I return to address this point in the conclusion of this thesis.

I now shift my focus, in the last section of this chapter, to examine the contexts in which the two categories of films are consumed. In doing so I draw attention to some of the dynamics external to the narrative of individual texts that also have a bearing upon the way in which Indian and popular/mainstream films come to be compared and judged.

Contexts of Consumption

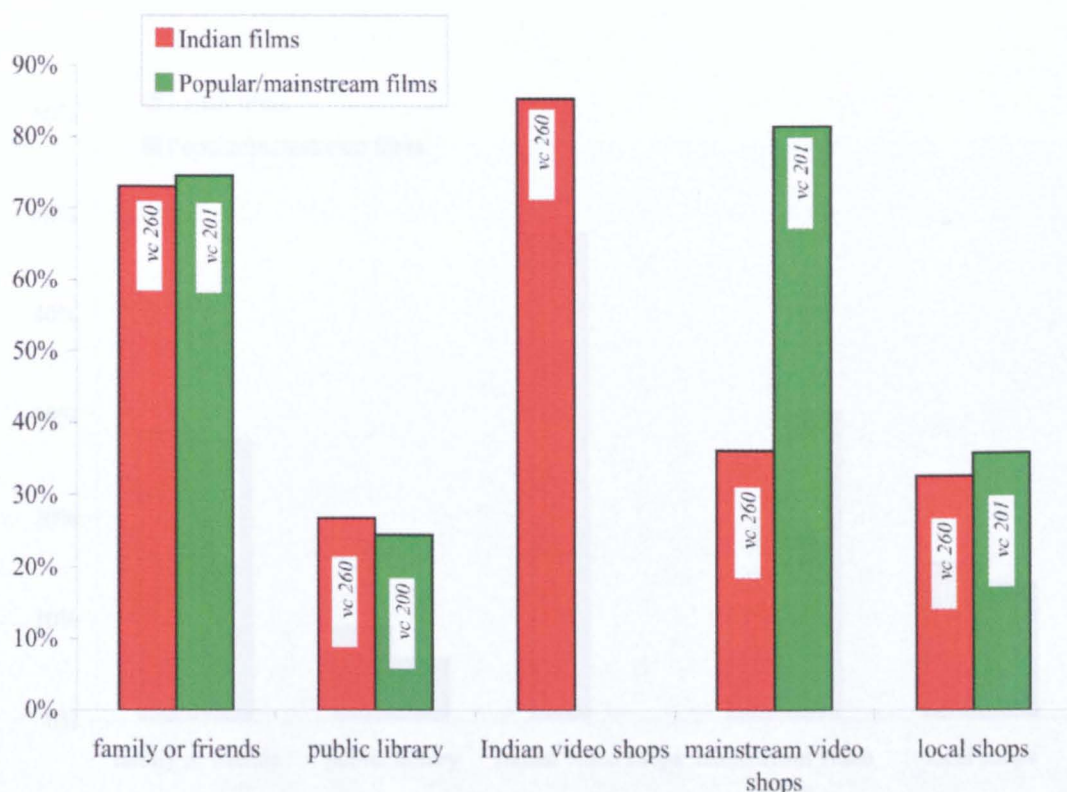
In her study Gillespie remarks that the culturally inferior status accorded to Indian films, 'does not confirm a 'truth'... [r]ather it exposes a common frame of reference based on dominant western (Hollywood) film-making practices'²²⁰. My own findings do not contradict Gillespie's reasoning. However, I would like to consider two aspects external to the narrative of texts but integral to the process of interaction with films on videotape to suggest that the picture is far more complex than simply an assimilation of, what is effectively, a 'false' conception of Western cultural forms as embodying 'superior' entities. The two aspects involve, firstly, the different outlets from where films on videotape were obtained, and secondly, the company in which videotapes were most likely to be watched.

Disparities in provision and quality of video merchandise as a basis for 'superior'/'inferior' cultures

The survey indicates marked differences in accessing videotapes of Indian and popular/mainstream films. As illustrated in Figure 22, the most common place for renting Indian films was from videoshops specialising in Indian films, with 85.4% of those respondents that watched Indian films using this outlet. By comparison, popular/mainstream films were most likely to be obtained from mainstream videoshops such as Blockbusters with 81.6% using this outlet. In addition, 'family and friends' were a common source for exchanging and obtaining videotapes of both Indian (73.1%) and popular/mainstream (74.6%) films. Places such as public libraries and local shops, which sold and/or rented videos as an aside rather than a main feature of their respective service, were not such ubiquitous avenues for accessing tapes.

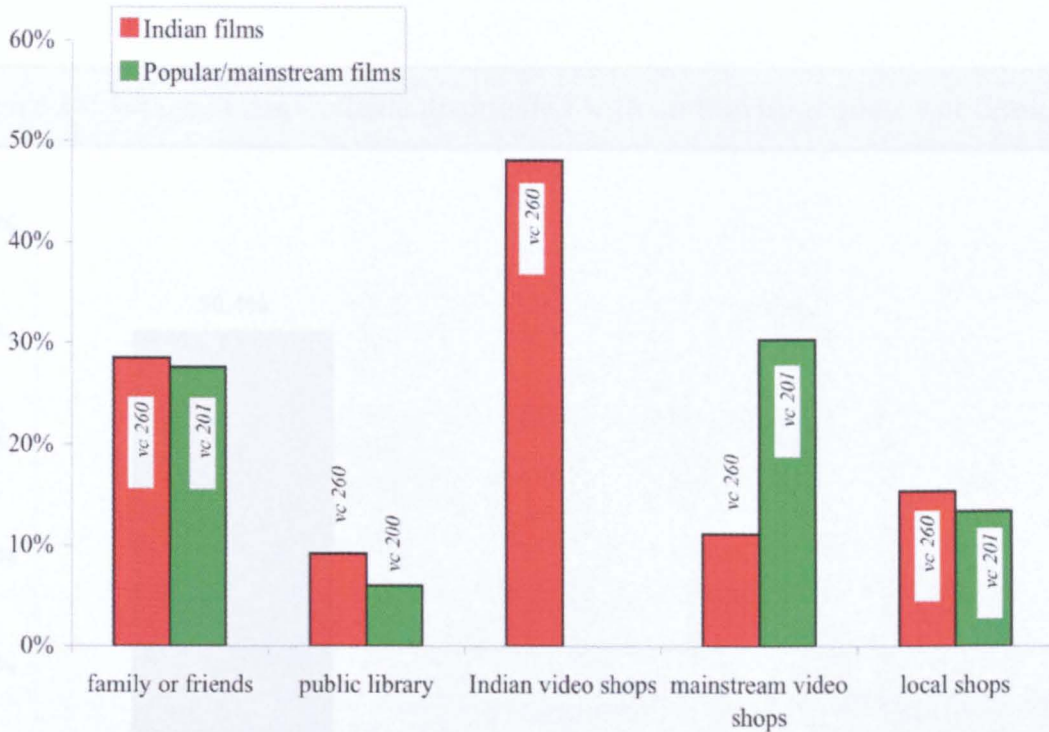
²²⁰Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p83

Figure 22: %tage of sample using various outlets for obtaining films



The above data establishes the proportion of consumers of each category of film using the respective outlets. An idea of the actual slice of the video market commanded by each outlet can be gleaned by considering the regularity with which the various sources were used. In this regard the statistics presented in Figure 23 indicate that, across the sample, the most common sources for obtaining videotapes were also the most frequently used. For example, of those who watched Indian films 48.1% obtained videotapes from ‘Indian videoshops’ once a fortnight or more, compared to 28.5% from ‘family/friends’, 15.4% from ‘local shops’ and 9.2% from ‘public libraries’. In the case of popular/mainstream films the statistics read, 30.3% from ‘mainstream videoshops’, 27.9% from ‘family/friends’, 13.4% from ‘local shops’ and 6% from ‘public libraries’.

Figure 23: %tage of respondents using various outlets fortnightly or more to rent/loan films



That videoshops are places from which videotapes are most likely to be obtained is hardly surprising given that their services are concentrated around the provision of video merchandise. What is of interest to this discussion is the existence and use of distinctly different videoshops for the two categories of film. They constitute much more than two retail outlets specialising in different cultural products. As I describe later, popular/mainstream and Indian videoshops represent very different structures of business enterprise resulting in a distinctly different 'cultural encounter' for their customers (see pp182-187). The point I wish to underline here is that the simultaneous usage of Indian and popular/mainstream videoshops amongst significant numbers of South Asians in Britain is a source for cultural comparison and contrast. This first came to light during the pre-pilot discussions where the focus for contrast and comparison overwhelmingly revolved around the quality of videotapes supplied by the respective outlets and the rental price charged. A recurrent criticism of merchandise supplied by videoshops specialising in Indian films was that the picture and sound quality were of a significantly poorer standard compared to that supplied

by popular/mainstream films. By contrast respondents were more dissatisfied with the rental price of popular/mainstream films on video compared to Indian films. These observations were consolidated and incorporated into the survey questionnaire and the responses are presented in Figures 24 and 25.

Figure 24: % tage of respondents dissatisfied with audio-visual quality of films

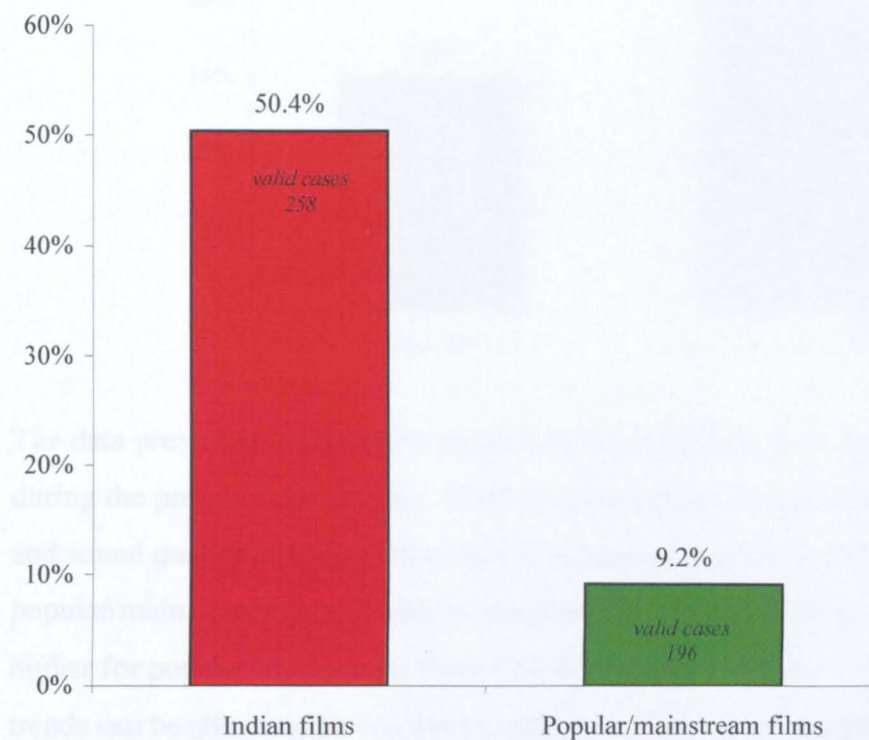
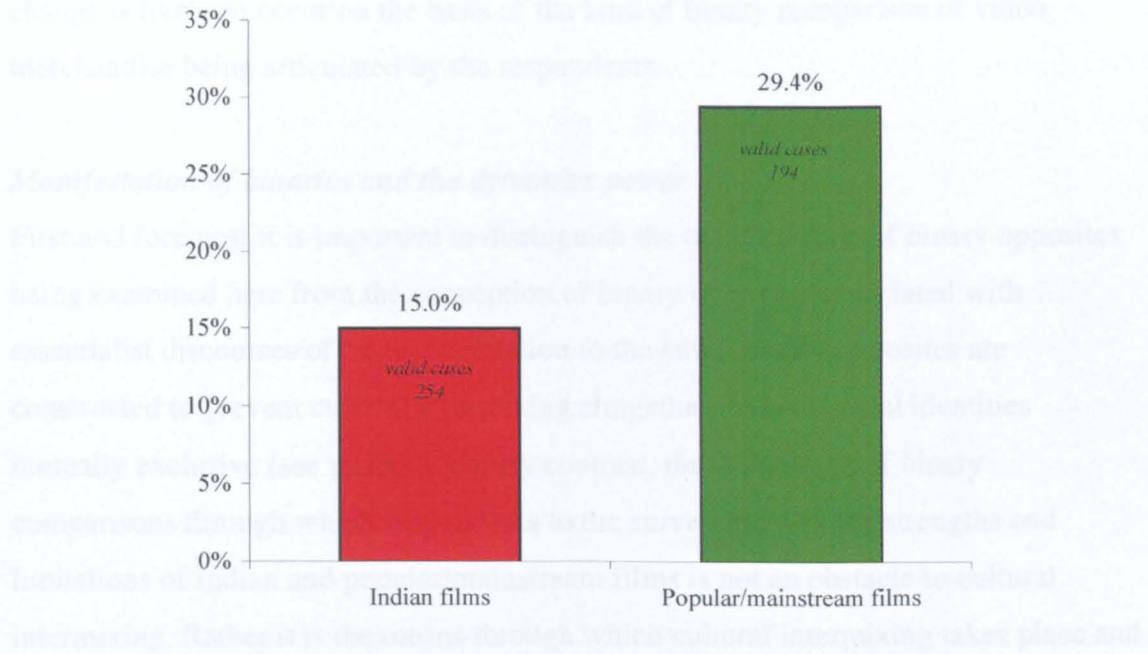


Figure 25: %tage of respondents dissatisfied with the rental price of films on videotape



The data presented in the above graphs confirms the pattern of dissatisfaction relayed during the pre-pilot discussions. 50.4% registered their dissatisfaction with the picture and sound quality of Indian films on videotape compared to a mere 9.2% for popular/mainstream films. Notably, dissatisfaction with the price of videotapes was higher for popular/mainstream films (29.4%) than Indian films (15%). Both these trends can be shown to be consistent with the comparative strengths and weaknesses of hiring videotapes of Indian and popular/mainstream films. For example, the far higher degree of dissatisfaction with the picture and sound quality of Indian films is reflective of the much wider circulation of poor quality pirated copies of Indian films compared to popular/mainstream films²²¹. As one participant commented, “sometimes the quality of the tapes are so bad that you can’t even distinguish whether it’s a man or a woman on the screen”. Similarly, at the time of the survey, Indian films could be rented for around 75p to £1.00 making them approximately three times cheaper than popular/mainstream films and so again it is unsurprising that respondents were more likely to express dissatisfaction at the price of popular/mainstream films than Indian films. These instances of contrast and comparison support Brah’s observation of how binaries come to play a fundamental role in individual experiences of diaspora. She

²²¹Manjeet Kipalani and Ron Grover, ‘Bollywood’, in *Business Week International*, December 2, 2002

adds that by unpicking how binaries are constituted and contested it is possible to begin to understand the dynamics of power and structure of social relations in a given context (see pp82-83). Here I respond to Brah's suggestion by considering where change is likely to occur on the basis of the kind of binary comparison of video merchandise being articulated by the respondents.

Manifestation of binaries and the dynamics power

First and foremost it is important to distinguish the manifestation of binary opposites being examined here from the conception of binary opposites associated with essentialist discourses of 'race'. In relation to the latter, binary opposites are constructed to prevent cultural intermixing altogether, to keep racial identities mutually exclusive (see pp151-153). By contrast, the framework of binary comparisons through which respondents to the survey identify the strengths and limitations of Indian and popular/mainstream films is not an obstacle to cultural intermixing. Rather it is the means through which cultural intermixing takes place and is negotiated. My concern here is to understand the particular arrangement of power relations being invoked within the binary comparisons of video merchandise. To do this the point I wish to focus on and examine is the huge difference in the degree of ferocity with which individuals pursued their respective criticisms. My findings highlight Rattansi's observation of the intertwining of racist and anti-racist discourses in the formation of modern cultures and subjectivities.

The intertwining of racist and anti-racist discourses

For instance, expressions of dissatisfaction with the rental price of popular/mainstream films was something respondents willingly registered but made no further references to in their critical assessment of the service offered by mainstream videoshops. By comparison, dissatisfaction with the picture and sound quality of Indian videotapes seemed to become entangled with an overall sense of mocking of the Indian film industry. Respondents' criticisms were directly related to the 'backward' and 'chaotic' nature of the Indian film industry and the 'haphazard and unprofessional way in which things were done by "these" people'.

As I've already noted the intense criticisms of the audio-visual qualities of Indian videotapes are not unjustified but the context in which this situation has emerged is more complex than the reasoning offered by respondents. For example, regulatory bodies such as the British Board for Film Classification and authorities working to eradicate pirated goods, although gradually increasing their involvement, have to date been less responsive and ill equipped to deal with the Indian film market than the popular/mainstream film market. As such there has been more room for the circulation of lower quality merchandise within the Indian video market which may be deemed unacceptable by statutory standards. Perhaps, a more fundamental reason behind the wider circulation of poor quality Indian videos is the unequal levels of financial backing invested in the market for Indian films compared to popular/mainstream films. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that the most expensive Indian film ever made was *Devdas* released in 2002 at a cost of \$15 million, whilst the production costs of the 1997 blockbuster *Titanic*, the most expensive Hollywood film to date, totalled \$200 million. The disparity in financial capital available to the two film industries will inevitably result in differences in the overall technical and production qualities of the end product put out by each, as manifested in the vast differences in quality of video merchandise available to customers.

The reduction of these more complex factors behind the disparity in quality of Indian and popular/mainstream videotapes to a situation of superior/inferior cultures corresponds to the pattern of commentary about the aesthetic quality of the two categories of film presented in the second section of this chapter. Both instances represent Rattansi's identification of how modern cultural identities often reflect the intertwining of racist and anti-racist discourses. For example, respondents seem to be well attuned to the strengths and weaknesses that set Indian and popular/mainstream films apart, whether that be specific to the styles of narrative or the quality and price of video merchandise. But, in both instances a relatively higher degree of dissatisfaction and criticism is expressed against Indian films and in a manner where the focus of criticism consistently foregrounds those features that are perceived to be strengths of popular/mainstream films. This scenario, as highlighted earlier in the chapter, is consistent with Gilroy's conception of the 'frog's perspective' of 'looking

from below upward' (see pp169-172). It is also reflective of Brah's assertion that the negotiation of multiple cultural locations necessarily involves a struggle over relations of power. With specific reference to the bicultural film culture of South Asians in Britain, the dynamics of power are weighted in favour of the dominant 'Other' in that specific characteristics of the dominant 'Other' are singled out as markers of progress and become the principle driving force directing the process of cultural change.

In as much as audio-visual features are essential interactive components of all films it could be argued that not being able to distinguish the characters on screen is not only bound to attract intense criticism, but, by bringing their respective technical qualities on a par with each other the propensity to arrange popular/mainstream and Indian films along a superior/inferior continuum might lessen. In that sense Gilroy's concern that the 'frog's perspective' thwarts the struggles of the oppressed from overcoming racialised forms of power and subordination is not immediately apparent in the example under discussion. The survey itself does not extend its focus to examine how exactly bringing the quality of Indian video merchandise on a par with popular/mainstream videos will impact upon dominant/subordinate relations. However, the character of respondents' criticisms about the provision of video merchandise is largely consistent with the flow and exchange of ideas between film production companies in Hollywood and India. As such I describe and use this process and the changes arising from it as a basis for beginning to reflect upon what exactly is being gained and lost when the process of cultural change is being driven by the condition of 'looking from below upward'. My findings support Gilroy's identification of how the diaspora cultures of blacks settled in the West are best understood as reflections of the 'antinomies of modernity'.

Diaspora cultures as reflections of the 'antinomies of modernity'

In their article titled 'Bollywood'²²², Manjit Kipalani and Ron Grover report on how the Indian film industry is trying to 'professionalise' through the gradual incorporation of Western business sense, practices and capital. The language in which Kipalani and Grover describe and refer to the two respective film industries echoes that used by respondents in both my own survey and Gillespie's research. For

example, Kipalani and Grover suggest that whilst 'flops' are not unusual in Hollywood, the Indian film industry is in a 'class by itself'. This kind of comparison clearly resonates with the comments of respondents quoted in earlier sections of this chapter. I do not wish to elaborate on this in any detail except to point out that the superior/inferior dichotomy dominating everyday comparisons of 'Hollywood' and 'Bollywood' by individuals participating in my survey, is also reflective of the exchange of ideas and relations between the two industries. In both cases the production values and practices of Hollywood are envisaged as the most advanced and therefore positioned as markers for the Indian film industry to aspire. In this regard Kipalani and Grover's article traces such changes as Indian production companies modelling themselves on U.S. companies such as Miramax, plans for multiplex screens to replace the existing 'dilapidated' movie houses, and Hollywood companies like Twentieth Century Fox signing contracts to market and distribute 'Bollywood' films. There is a long way to go before the Indian film industry begins to match, as Kipalani and Grover put it, 'the efficiency and production values of Hollywood', but the initial indications chart a process of change that is predominantly driven by specifically Western principles of capitalism. The result being that there is a gradual homogenisation of the cultures of production and consumption surrounding the two categories of film.

Here we can begin to identify how the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' is weakened because the non-linear arrangement of time/space dynamics that is seen to enable 'new' identities and 'new' cultural outlooks to emerge is thwarted by the homogenisation of 'cultures of interaction' defined by the principles of capitalism. This would correspond with John Kraniuskas' assertion that capitalist reterritorialisation presents itself today 'as the production of the new subjects of a socio-cultural order which is both specifically transnational (postnational) and one in which, from the point of view of time, the disavowal of coevalness that structures narratives of progress and development is being tendentially undermined by the new technologies allied to capital itself'²²³. With respect to the survey I want describe the process by which 'cultures of interaction' become homogenised by considering how

²²³Manjeet Kipalani and Ron Grover, 'Bollywood', in *Business Week International*, December 2, 2002

the changes charted by Kipalani and Grover are likely to affect mainstream and Indian videoshops which at present constitute very different structures of business enterprise posing distinct 'cultural encounters' for their customers. I should clarify that the phrase 'cultures of interaction' is used here specifically to refer to the style and structure of conversations and personal relations involved in the process of obtaining and watching films on videotape.

The different business structures and styles of mainstream videoshops and those outlets specialising in Indian films can be presented as the difference between a large scale corporate set up and a small scale, often family run, business. These differing entrepreneurial approaches evoke different styles of interaction and structures of feeling which constitute another aspect, alongside the interaction with texts, of operating within distinct cultural codes and styles that is integral to the video film culture of many South Asians in Britain. The survey data itself does not provide an insight into the differences, but comments from the pre-pilot discussions can be used to establish an overall picture.

Those contributing to the pre-pilot discussions tended to describe their visits to mainstream video outlets in somewhat impersonal terms. Many pointed out that information about the latest releases was readily available from monthly magazines provided by the shops thereby allowing for some degree of pre-planning. In fact, trips to mainstream videoshops were often made after deciding which film(s) to hire. Many respondents would take part in deciding what to watch but would then ask, or sometimes 'toss' a coin with, another member of the family as to who would go to the shop. On the whole respondents' comments depicted a largely functional encounter with mainstream videoshops which is consistent with the underlying objective of the management style adopted by such outlets. For example, many, as epitomised by Blockbusters, devote a great deal of attention to detail ranging from role of staff, structure of the shop, customer relations, and processing of merchandise. All of these aspects are broken down in minute detail with set procedures that are directed and monitored by a central office. As with other corporate run services, such as McDonalds, the aim is to create one brand name and image which can be recreated

²²³ 'Hybridity in a Transnational Frame', in *Hybridity and its Discontents*, edited by A. Brah & A.E.

any number of times in any number of places and which can deliver a product as quickly as possible to as many people as possible. The expectations of service are clearly marked out for people on both sides of the counter. There is a set timescale for the hire of videotapes, with the imposition of a penalty should that timescale be breached. This is the business style that dominates the popular/mainstream video market. The result is a highly structured operation with a somewhat formal relationship between customer and provider.

In contrast to their experiences of using mainstream outlets, respondents' comments indicated that their trips to Indian videoshops involved much more personal interaction with the owners/assistants. Visits were often impromptu and made whilst 'passing by', and not always with a view to hiring but simply enquiring if 'any new films had arrived'. In the absence of printed material listing and describing individual texts for hire, background details to Indian films were often obtained (or confirmed in instances where respondents had already learnt about a new release from a programme, magazine or friend) directly from the owner/assistant. Again respondents' accounts of using Indian videoshops can be connected to their structure and management style in that most Indian outlets adopt an informal approach to service provision, many not even enforcing the membership cards that are a central feature of Blockbusters. The majority are individual or family run businesses and so each outlet has its own personal style and layout. There are few stringent rules of hire with many customers not returning tapes for several days or even weeks without incurring penalties. One woman in the pre-pilot discussions stated, "Sometimes I don't return the videotapes for weeks and the shopowner doesn't say anything or charge me extra".

These contrasting accounts of the experience of using Indian and mainstream video outlets help to visualise how current interventions to improve the production and marketing of Indian films, as described by Kipalani and Grover, are likely to lead to a homogenisation of 'cultures of interaction'. For example, the introduction of Western business sense and production values to the Indian film industry is likely to improve the quality of merchandise supplied to Indian videoshops. At the same time better

quality merchandise is also likely to mean higher production costs which is likely to result in an increase in rental price. These changes are likely to place the management and structure of videoshops under close scrutiny with the aim of introducing new systems designed to attract more customers and encourage a higher turnover of stock in order to recuperate the increased costs. Under such conditions it is unlikely that the informal cultural relations that are currently the norm between customers and owners/assistants of Indian videoshops will survive, and are likely to become more and more like the formal cultural encounters characteristic of mainstream videoshops. Of course these predictions are premature and it may even turn out that mainstream outlets become the main points of access for Indian films in Britain. Whatever the exact outcome, on the basis of current trends it is likely that the cultures of production and consumption of Indian films will become increasingly like the cultures of production and consumption of popular/mainstream films. The implications of this trend for the possibilities of racially transgressive outlooks to emerge from the 'process of hybridisation' are highlighted by John Hutnyk in his examination of the increasing popularity of 'World Music' which brings together diverse sounds from all parts of the globe for an increasingly diverse audience creating a musical 'multiculture'²²⁴. Hutnyk coins the phrase 'homogenisation of social relations'²²⁵ to describe how the musical 'multiculture' is effectively brought together by capitalist relations through which the different social, political and cultural contexts of the various musics are squeezed down to the material marketable features²²⁶..

As provisional as my analysis of the impact of current interventions within the Indian film industry has been, it provides a useful position from which to begin to understand Gilroy's assertion that contemporary black cultures might be usefully examined as

²²⁴Adorno at Womad: South Asian Crossovers and the Limits of Hybridity-Talk', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp106-136

²²⁵'Magical Mystical Tourism', in Travel Worlds, edited by R. Kaur. & J. Hutnyk, (London, Zed Books, 1999), pp94-119

²²⁶In his book Against Race, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), Paul Gilroy also identifies corporate capitalism as the main terrain for black cultural representation within mainstream discourses and through which black culture has lost much of its political dynamism being reduced to mere symbols. A similar argument is proposed by Sara Ahmed's notion of 'stranger fetishism' which she coins to describe the West's encounter with the cultures of 'stranger's' where it is overwhelmingly differences that can be assimilated into the process of consumption are valued whilst those that can't carry little value. See Ahmed's Strange Encounters, (London, Routledge, 2000). See also chapter 2 titled 'Eating the Other' in bell hooks' Black Looks, (London, Routledge, 1992)

commentaries upon the 'antinomies of modernity'. In essence Gilroy suggests that, rather than simply applauding the increasing visibility of black cultural expressions in the West as a sign of racial equality, focus should be on how the structures and ambivalences of modernity are challenged or kept in place (see p89). My discussion of the cultures of videoshops and the kind of changes taking place has highlighted the subtle ways in which the 'frog's perspective' unfolds whereby there may be no sign of the erosion of culturally distinct forms but a gradual homogenisation of the dynamics of 'cultural interaction'. What emerges is a situation akin to Gargi Bhattacharyya's description of how 'multiculturalism enters mainstream logics in ways that might not touch racism at all, but which still shape everyday narratives of ethnicity'²²⁷.

I am unable to draw on empirical evidence to examine how exactly the homogenisation of 'cultures of interaction' diminishes the ability of the bicultural film culture amongst South Asians to evolve in a manner that is disruptive to the 'dominant order'. However, it is possible to provide some indication of the point being made by referring to the integration of other aspects of Indian culture within mainstream British society, such as food and clothes. Indian food, in particular, has become so popular in Britain that the dish chicken tikka masala has now displaced fish'n'chips as the nations favourite dish. Yet eating Indian food has not made the British any less racist towards Indian people. David Parker's examination of the relations over the Chinese takeaway counter provides a more detailed insight into how the British appetite for 'so-called ethnic cuisines' signals a *celebratory* multiculturalism which is fraught with structures of racialised domination²²⁸. In a similar vein, the capacity of an Indian film culture in Britain to disrupt the 'dominant order' significantly diminishes as the 'cultures of interaction' through which Indian films are accessed and consumed become increasingly aligned with those of popular/mainstream films. That is not to suggest that the possibility for improving the quality of Indian videos should be compromised in order to preserve a particular style

²²⁷ 'Riding Multiculturalism', in Multicultural States, edited by D. Bennett, (London, Routledge, 1998), pp252-266. Leela Tanikella makes Bhattacharya's observation much more concrete in her description of how the appropriation of 'cultural hybridity' as a metaphor for overcoming racial tensions in the Caribbean has in fact served to reify racial differences and leave structural inequalities in tact. See Tanikella's essay, 'The Politics of Hybridity: Race, Gender and Nationalism in Trinidad', in Cultural Dynamics, Vol. 15, No. 2, (London, Sage, 2003), pp153-181

or 'culture of interaction'. The point is rather to draw attention to the need to identify ways in which Indian films might benefit from the technical advances of popular/mainstream films without also having to succumb to a particular process and style of interaction that is distinctly Western. To do this, as I argue in the concluding chapter, it may be necessary to question the particular framework of cultural relations that is imposed by the 'new' logic of capital (see pp301-302).

I began this chapter by suggesting that an increasing trend towards bicultural patterns of media consumption amongst South Asians in Britain challenged mutually exclusive relations of 'race'. As the chapter has progressed my analysis of the survey findings has emphasised that culturally fragmented identities and lifestyles may in fact reinforce racialised structures of power and subordination if the respective cultural forms are positioned and contested within the same framework of cultural interaction. I want to end the chapter by expanding upon the notion that the dynamics of interaction determine the meaning drawn from particular cultural forms a little further, by examining the company in which respondents are likely to watch Indian and popular/mainstream films. This time I apply Bourdieu's conception of 'group habitus' to the survey findings in order to develop my argument.

'Group habitus' and the operation of the system of distinctions

Bourdieu's conception of 'group habitus' is explored in the specific context of consumption which makes it directly applicable to my own focus on the consumption of popular/mainstream and Indian films. More specifically, Bourdieu introduces the term 'group habitus' to describe the process by which people internalise and reproduce rules for behaviour. Since the habitus varies with 'different conditions of existence' individuals of different class backgrounds acquire different frames of reference for social action which create group distinctions in tastes and lifestyles. Bourdieu sees this process of socialisation as functioning 'below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will'²²⁹.

²²⁸'The Chinese Takeaway and the Diasporic Habitus: Space, Time and Power Geometries', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, edited by B. Hesse, (London, Zed Books, 2000), pp73-95

To illustrate and develop his argument Bourdieu examines survey data on French people's cultural tastes and preferences. Through a comparison of consumer lifestyles in areas such as diet, exercise and tastes in music, Bourdieu demonstrates how the social distance between bourgeois culture and the cultural activities of lower classes isn't always marked by a preference for different products, but is often manifested in the social value and meanings consumers attach to the product(s), i.e. how the object of consumption is appropriated. He writes,

Owning a chateau, a manor house or grange is not only a question of money; one must also appropriate it, appropriate the cellar and learn the art of bottling, [...], acquire trophies, the secrets of fishing, the skills of gardening, competences which are both ancient and slowly learned, like cooking or knowledge of wines, appropriate, in a word, the art of living of the aristocrat, or country gentleman, indifferent to the passage of time and rooted in things which last.²³⁰

Bourdieu's work has been criticised on a number of fronts, not least for its privileging of class relations and its overly functionalist approach which renders it unable to comprehend a route out of the subordinate positions experienced by the lower classes²³¹. For my own purposes here I want to suggest that the strengths of Bourdieu's theory of consumption may be extracted by adding a qualification to his conception of 'habitus'.

The bicultural patterns of film consumption amongst many South Asians in Britain suggest that it is not necessary to choose one 'group habitus' over another. Rather by inhabiting different 'habitus' it becomes possible to engage and occupy cultural locations which are often placed in opposition to one another. The idea that it is possible to occupy not one but several 'group habitus' breaks with Bourdieu's

²²⁹*Distinction*, (London, Routledge, 1984), p466

²³⁰*ibid.*, p281

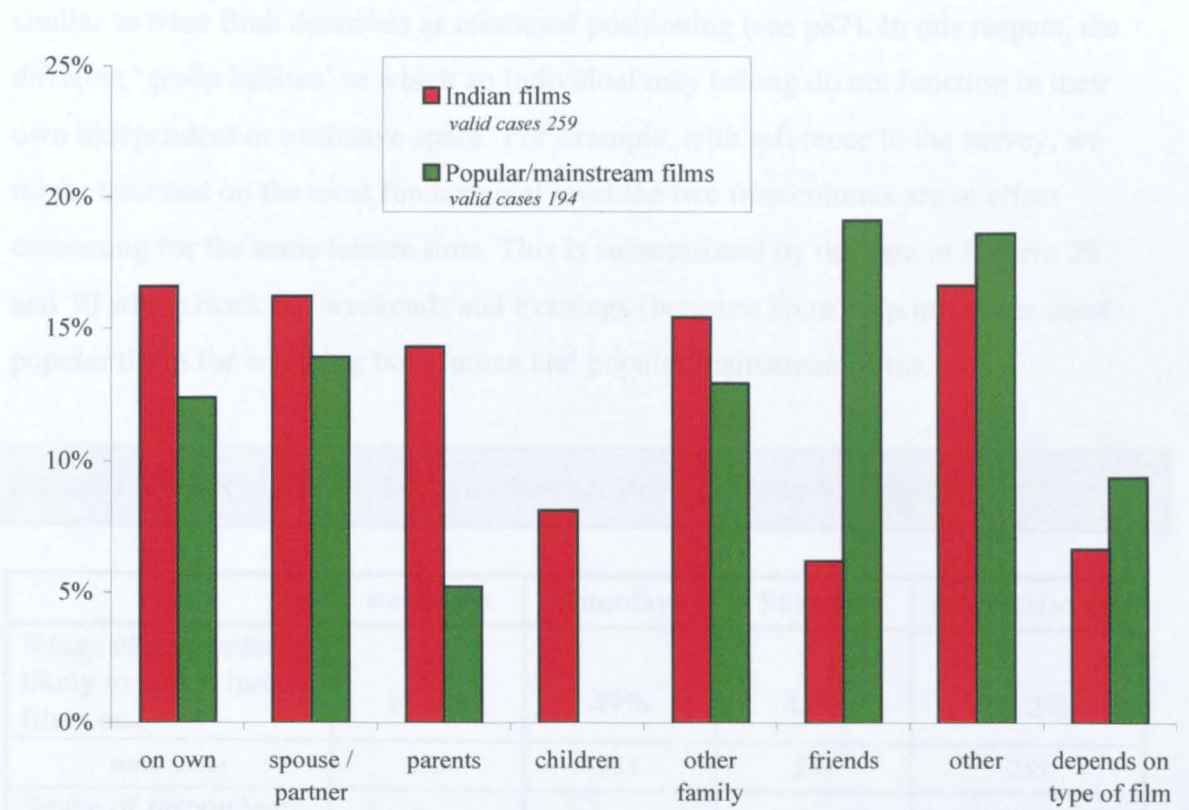
²³¹see for example, Paul du Gay et al *Doing Cultural Studies* (London, Sage, 1997)

Paul Connolly, 'Racism and Postmodernism: Towards a Theory of Practice', in *Sociology after Postmodernism*, edited by D. Owen, (London, Sage, 1997)

Diane Reay, 'They Employ Cleaners to do That: Habitus in the Primary Classroom', in *British Journal of Sociology*, 16, 3 (1995), pp353-371

definition which functions in a singular manner. For example, from Figure 28 it can be ascertained that Indian films were most likely to be watched individually or with members of the immediate family, with the percentage being highest for on your own (16.6%); spouse/partner (16.22%); parents (14.29%) and other family (15.44%). By comparison, whilst the statistics are relatively similar (although there is a slight decrease) for the proportion of individuals most likely to watch popular/mainstream films on their own (12.37%), with a 'spouse/partner' (13.92%) or with 'other family' (12.9%), there is a significant decrease in the number of respondents likely to watch popular/mainstream films with their 'parents' (5.15%). This is accompanied by a corresponding increase for the category 'friends' (19.07% compared to 6.17% for Indian films).

Figure 26: Company in which films on videotape are most likely to be watched



The differences in the company in which Indian films and popular/mainstream films are watched lends some force to Bourdieu's argument about the socialisation process through which individuals internalise and reproduce rules for behaviour. The data is also consistent with my own assertion earlier about how South Asian youth are likely

to have learned from their families the linguistic and visual codes necessary to make sense of Indian films and a large percentage continue to watch Indian films with members of their immediate family. In addition, through socialisation outside of home they have also obtained the cultural competence required to understand popular/mainstream films which are more likely to be consumed with friends or family members of the same age group. This is by no means to suggest that the consumption and cultural competence of engaging with popular/mainstream films is only learned outside of the family, and that of Indian films inside, nor that this process is unitary. But what can be established from the survey is that consumption and access to cultural commodities is, with varying degrees, limited/enhanced encouraged/discouraged by the way in which individuals relate to and are positioned by the various 'group habitus' through which they experience their everyday lives. Each 'group habitus' defines and redefines its own dynamics of consumption and at times the multiple locations may require some negotiation or 'choice' to be exercised, similar to what Brah describes as relational positioning (see p87). In this respect, the different 'group habitus' to which an individual may belong do not function in their own independent or exclusive space. For example, with reference to the survey, we might note that on the most fundamental level the two film cultures are in effect competing for the same leisure time. This is substantiated by the data in Figures 29 and 30 which mark out weekends and evenings (between 8p.m.-11p.m.) as the most popular times for watching both Indian and popular/mainstream films.

Figure 27: Days of the week when films are most likely to be watched

	weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays	no specific day
%tage of respondents likely to watch Indian films on...	11.4%	49%	42%	32.2%
<i>valid cases</i>	255	255	255	255
%tage of respondents likely to watch popular/mainstream films on...	21%	45.1%	37.9%	32.8%
<i>valid cases</i>	195	195	195	195

Figure 28: Time of day when films are most likely to be watched

	morning 9a.m.-12p.m.	afternoon 12p.m.-5p.m.	early evening 5p.m.-8p.m.	evening 8p.m.-11p.m.	after 11p.m.
%tage of respondents likely to watch Indian films between...	5.8%	16.3%	33.9%	75.9%	16.3%
<i>valid cases</i>	257	257	257	257	257
%tage of respondents likely to watch popular/mainstream films between...	4.1%	13.3%	33.3%	83.1%	40.5%
<i>valid cases</i>	195	195	195	195	195

The above data does indicate two significant differences in that a notably higher proportion of respondents (about 10%) watched popular/mainstream films on weekdays compared to Indian films. Also the proportion of respondents that watched popular/mainstream films (40.5%) after 11p.m. was more than twice as many as for Indian films (16.3%). These two differences aside the overall picture is one where Indian and popular/mainstream films are consumed within a similar time frame but in the company of different people or different 'group habitus'. Thus, we might assume that for many individuals regularly consuming both categories of films, choosing between a popular/mainstream and Indian film is often not simply a matter of preferring one text over another. The decision is interlinked to a variety of other issues such as choosing one 'group habitus' over another, or, securing control over the respective domestic technologies from other members of the household. Conversely, an individual may end up watching a film at a time not of his/her choosing but determined by another member of one or other 'group habitus'.

It is in the context where various 'group habitus' compete for the same time and space that power relations come into play, where multiple subject positions and narratives intersect creating contradictions and tensions. And it is in this situation of intersecting subjectivities that hybridity theorists locate the possibility for 'new' more racially transgressive identities and frames of reference to emerge. Crucially, so far as the survey is concerned, the contestation of competing identities is more often resolved

through the hierarchical arrangement of the two categories of film in question in a manner that is consistent with the process of racialisation. With regards to the theoretical expositions of 'cultural hybridity' this situation might be presented as the 'war of manoeuvre' being enacted within the 'war of position'.

A 'war of manoeuvre' within the 'war of position'

In chapter 2 I outlined how Hall distinguishes between the 'war of position' and the 'war of manoeuvre' as the manifestly dissimilar ways in which each engages the meaning of difference. In summary, the 'war of manoeuvre' conceives of difference as a mutually exclusive and unbridgeable separation, whereas the 'war of position' sees difference as a 'sliding signifier' emphasising the numerous in-between positions which disrupt conceptions of such categories as 'male' and 'female', or 'black' and 'white', as fixed opposites (see pp72-74). The bicultural patterns of film consumption amongst young South Asians, signifying as it does the engagement of distinct cultural forms, might be interpreted as an example of the 'war of position'. One product has not been wholly preferred over another. Rather, a position has been negotiated which engages both Indian and popular/mainstream films. However, within this 'war of position' we might still also identify a 'war of manoeuvre' as captured in the following comment made by two of Gillespie's respondents, "It doesn't hurt to watch an Indian film with the parents.' 'No, it kills you.'"²³²

In effect, what I am emphasising here is the social reality surrounding the everyday negotiations of diaspora identities, where the collision of cultures does not happen in some neutral or objective space in which the subject is free to negotiate the various cultural influences as if they were somehow devoid of all power relations. So far as the survey is concerned, this contestation of time and space is resolved through a prevailing prominence of what Bourdieu describes as 'the aesthetic sense as a sense of distinction', where, 'tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes'²³³. The earlier quotation of

²³²Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p81

²³³Distinction, (London, Routledge, 1984), p56

two boys expressing 'grave' reluctance at watching Indian films with their parents would certainly fit Bourdieu's assertion.

The presence of an inferior/superior dichotomy embedded in the critical appraisal of Indian and popular/mainstream films was a point established earlier. A qualified application of Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' has enabled me to illuminate the dynamics under which such dichotomies might become invoked within contemporary diaspora experiences²³⁴. This is a central argument of this thesis, that the various cultural forms to which diaspora subjects are exposed are already imbued with relations of power, of competing identities, of struggles to justify preference for one cultural form over another.

The audience survey has captured one particular example of modern cultural interaction specific to trends in audience activity amongst South Asians in mid 1990's Britain. Reading the survey findings in the context of theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' has been insightful for establishing the value of hybridity theorists' focus on culturally fragmented subjectivities as a position from which to identify a racially transgressive cultural politics. It might be argued that what I have done in this chapter, by making a direct comparison between popular/mainstream and Indian films, is in effect homogenise different aspects of South Asian identities. However, it is also one reality of the diaspora experience of being engaged in distinct cultures in socially dissimilar often conflicting circumstances. To put it another way, I have stripped the reality of one particular diaspora experience right down to the foundations - to the origins of the encounter of distinct cultural forms - and highlighted, perhaps even accentuated, the disparate character and status of those foundations. In that sense the survey is not an examination of the creativity, or culturally hybrid expressions, emerging from the contemporary British South Asian population. Their responses to the survey are in fact responses to other people's

²³⁴David Parker offers a slightly different re-working of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' in his analysis of everyday encounters in Chinese takeaways. Parker stresses the need to take account of 'power geometries' that are integral to mundane experiences of diaspora and which have tended to be overlooked by cultural theorists favouring an analysis of the arts. He develops the concept of 'diasporic habitus' to describe the racial harassment which becomes a contestatory element of multiculturalism as it is experienced and negotiated by Chinese individuals servicing white customers over the takeaway counter. see 'The Chinese Takeaway and the Diasporic Habitus: Space, Time and

cultural expressions and cultural outlooks. The importance of undertaking such an examination as part of a project for understanding the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' is underlined by the fact that it is only by identifying an individual's critical, or for that matter, uncritical position with respect to specific forms of cultural expression that we might begin the real challenge of assessing how any subsequent fusion of those cultural forms may or may not overcome structures of feeling that circumvent racial and cultural hierarchies.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Research Design for Examining 'Muslim Subjectivities'

As already outlined in chapter 1, the investigation into young Muslim identities shares a common purpose with the audience survey in that the principal concern of both studies is to assess conceptions of racially transgressive cultural change charted by hybridity theorists in the context of everyday cultural realities. At the same time, within the overall structure and emerging argument of the thesis the study on young Muslims is positioned as a contrasting context of cultural negotiation to media consumption which shifts the focus of discussion from the themes of 'cultural pluralism' and 'fragmentation' (which were central to interpreting the data from the audience survey) to that of 'cultural location'. This shift is made apparent in chapter 6, where notions such as 'anti-anti-essentialism', 'homing desire', 'yearning for stability' and 'identity politics one' acquire prominence in the course of presenting the narratives of the Muslim respondents. The concern of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the methodological approach through which the empirical data on young Muslim identities was elicited.

The empirical research into young Muslim identities consisted of two interlinked but separate pieces of fieldwork. The first was a group discussion with six people and the other a video project consisting of nine individual contributions. The data gathered was of a qualitative nature and thus of a very different scope and character from the audience survey. The implications of this in terms of the contrasting contributions of quantitative and qualitative research for understanding everyday cultural realities is addressed in chapter 7. The methodological structure and quality of the two studies can be more specifically distinguished by their differences in research design (including aims and objectives); sample recruitment; relations between the researcher and respondents; and data processing. These themes organise the first four sections of this chapter. The fifth section comments on the scope and limitations of the findings.

Research Design

In identifying an appropriate research method for my investigation into young Muslim identities my main consideration was that the study's objective was to enquire how the foregrounding of Islam may or may not constrain the possibilities for racially transgressive cultural change envisaged by hybridity theorists. In that sense I was not concerned with disputing the claim that Muslim identities are predicated on one axis of identification i.e. Islam. This was in fact the starting point for the study in that it was only interested in individuals for whom Islam was the defining source of their everyday lives. In as much as there is no one homogenous conception of Islam it was necessary for the empirical research to focus on the particularity of individual experiences of being Muslim. As such, quantitative research methods, which would have been limited to producing statistical evidence indicating overall patterns of identity negotiation, were ruled inadequate for the second case study. What was required was data of a qualitative nature providing an insight into individual realities of negotiating an Islamic way of life in Britain and so a small scale qualitative investigation was preferred.

As well as choosing qualitative research methods, which I describe in more detail later (see pp210-213), there were three other key decisions taken that influenced the research design. These were, firstly, to focus on the identity negotiations of Muslim youth; secondly, to include individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds; and thirdly, to make a video recording of the respondents' comments in addition to a group discussion. I explain each of these decisions in turn.

Focusing on Muslim youth

In Britain, since the 'Rushdie affair' it is predominantly young Muslims who have been at the centre of much media attention and political debates about an 'Islamic revival' and the dangers posed by 'Islamic fundamentalism'²³⁵. For example, the image of young Muslims burning a copy of The Satanic Verses has come to symbolise Muslim feelings during the 'Rushdie affair'. In addition, in the aftermath of the events of September 11th it has become commonplace for the faces and names of Muslims from Britain associated with 'terrorist' activity to make headline news.

These individuals have tended to fall in to the 20-35 age group and have included Richard Reid, Asif Hanif and Omar Sharif²³⁶. The currency of this trend in representations of Muslim identities in Britain made young Muslims an obvious and historically relevant choice for my own investigation.

Another equally influential factor in the decision to focus on the younger age group relates to the fact that the cultural expressions of second and third generation black Britons have been a significant focus for hybridity theorists in their delineations of racially transgressive cultural change. In relation to this the majority of young Muslims in Britain were born here but also belong to post-war 'migrant' communities. Most of them are of South Asian background with family 'origins' in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan²³⁷. The simultaneous status of British born with 'migrant' background situates many young Muslims in an 'in-between space', of standing between distinct cultural assemblages²³⁸, of having to negotiate genealogies of dispersion with those of staying put²³⁹. That significant numbers are foregrounding Islam as the primary source for negotiating their identities suggests a trend that is contraposed to hybridity theorists' emphasis on the culturally fragmented character of 'migrant' identities. In that sense ratifying the in/compatibility of contemporary Muslim identities with conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' provides a useful context from which to assess the relevance of the work of hybridity theorists for understanding modern experiences of 'race' and culture as well as evaluate the

²³⁵Tariq Modood, 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair', in Race, Culture and Difference, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992), p271

²³⁶Richard Reid (from South London) was nicknamed the 'shoe bomber' following his attempt in December 2001 to bring down an American airliner, on route from Paris to Miami, by igniting explosives in the soles of his shoes. He was tried in the US and jailed for life in January 2003. Asif Hanif (from North London) was identified as being responsible for a suicide attack in Tel Aviv in April 2003. His accomplice was named as Omar Sharif (from Derby) who had initially escaped the scene of the bombing after his explosives belt failed to detonate. Weeks later Sharif's body was found washed up on a beach in Tel Aviv.

²³⁷For a detailed statistical breakdown and discussion see Philip Lewis, Islamic Britain, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp 10-26. For a background to the history of Muslim migration to Britain see Steven Vertovec, 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain', in Muslims in the West, edited by Y. Yazbeck Haddad, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp19-35

²³⁸Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, (London, Verso, 1993)

²³⁹Avtar Brah, Cartographies of Diaspora, (London, Routledge, 1996)

racially transgressive qualities of the cultural outlooks of the current generation of young Muslims.

An ethnically diverse sample

The group discussion and video involved Muslims of diverse ethnic backgrounds. This needs explanation given the thesis' focus on South Asians in Britain. The decision to include individuals who were not of South Asian descent was more an 'opportune' decision than something I had clearly defined or pre-planned. In the course of recruiting respondents for the group discussion one individual offered to approach a friend who was white English and who had converted to Islam. My initial reaction was that the thesis was specifically about South Asians and therefore it was not appropriate to include Muslims of other ethnic backgrounds. After further thought I reconsidered this decision. Foremost in my mind was that identities are not negotiated in isolation but through interaction with other identities. For example, as I describe in the first section of chapter 6, experiences of *being* Muslim in Britain are not simply defined by an individual's interpretation of Islam. They are also influenced by, for instance, the way in which dominant representations position Muslims in relation to 'other' identities, and/or the ways in which non Muslims perceive and interact with what they consider to be defining features of Muslim lifestyles (see pp219-229)²⁴⁰. With reference to my overall objectives for the second case study two observations in particular determined my decision to include Muslim respondents of diverse ethnic background.

Firstly, one of the prominent features distinguishing the identities of young South Asian Muslims in Britain from their elders is that their negotiations and practice of Islam is not so firmly intertwined and demarcated by national and cultural boundaries related to country of 'origin'. For instance, the respondents participating in my study were critical of mosques established by elders where membership tended to be

²⁴⁰The potential for a diverse sample to generate data providing a more complex insight into the process of identity negotiation is highlighted by an ethnographic study undertaken by David Gauntlett and Annette Hill titled *TV Living* (London, BFI, 1999). Their study examined TV diaries of a sample of 500 individuals broadly representative of the UK's population, by age, class, region and gender. The ability of the authors to make comparisons of the use and impact of television across different generations, classes, genders and regions, enables them to describe the role of specific axis of identification in people's interaction with television, and vice versa, as being even more complex than studies which have preferred to focus on a particular category of audience (such as children or women).

overwhelmingly dominated by shared ancestral 'origins' (see p259). Similarly, the expectation imposed by parents that their children should marry not just any Muslim but a Muslim whose family was of the same country of origin was also fiercely contested (see pp258-259). I felt the most effective way for the empirical research to encourage and reflect the ethnically diverse relations integral to the negotiation of Muslim identities amongst young South Asians was to include respondents of different ethnic backgrounds.

Secondly, as Avtar Brah notes, 'Racism directed against South Asians in post-Rushdie Britain [...] represents a reconstitution of 'the Asian' [...] through a foregrounding of 'the Muslim'²⁴¹. Again I felt the best way to establish the significance of this dynamic in defining and shaping Muslim identities in Britain was to make direct comparisons of the narratives of individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Chapter 6 presents the narratives of non South Asian respondents to highlight the operation of a racialisation process which means that being a Muslim in Britain is as much influenced by 'common sense' perceptions that interweave stereotypes of 'Asian' and 'Muslim', as it is by the individual's specific interpretation of Islam (see pp219-229).

Group discussion and video recording

As has already been noted the empirical research relating to the study on Muslim youth consisted of a group discussion and video. Both took place at Middlesex University and were conducted within three months of each other in April and June 1997 respectively. The group discussion involved 6 individuals and took the format of a semi-structured depth interview, similar to what Oppenheim calls an exploratory depth interview²⁴². By this I mean that prior to the actual group discussion I had identified a few topics and questions as possible points of conversation and debate. These were assembled under five headings and were also used as a basis for a handout which is reproduced in Table 1. The five headings were identified in the course of

²⁴¹Cartographies of Diaspora, (London, Routledge, 1996), p169

²⁴²Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, (London, Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1992), see chapter 5

reading related literature²⁴³ as well as in conversation with respondents during the recruitment process.

Table 1: Discussion Handout

<p>Discussion: Islam and Young British Muslims</p> <p>Date: 9th April 1997</p> <p>Areas for possible discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Role of Islam in individual's life. - including significant changes in personal observance / practice of Islam.2. Similarities and differences in practice / observance of Islam between the individual and immediate family.3. Reaction(s) of others directed to personal observance of Islam. e.g. from friends / fellow students / staff / employers / family / general public.4. Media representations of Islam. - Is it fair? ; indifferent? etc.5. "Fundamentalism" - Does it have a progressive role in furthering the cause of Islam? - Its effect on prejudice / respect for people of differing religious, sexual orientations? <p>Bilkis Malek Middlesex University</p>

²⁴³Tariq Modood, 'British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair', in Race, Culture and Difference, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992)
The Runnymede Commission on British Muslims, Islamophobia. It's Features and Dangers, (London, The Runnymede Trust, 1997a)
Philip Lewis, Islamic Britain, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1994)
Edward Said, Covering Islam, (London, Vintage Books, 1981)
Edward Said, Orientalism (London, Penguin Books, 1978)
Akbar Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, eds, Islam, Globalisation and Postmodernity, (London, Routledge, 1994)

The handout was distributed to each respondent at the beginning of the group discussion. As part of my introduction to the discussion I explained that the handout was not to be used as a formal structure or guide for the discussion but should be viewed as indicating possible points for dialogue. I also emphasised that it wasn't essential for the discussion to cover all of the topics and respondents should feel free to raise additional topics not indicated in the handout. The idea was to allow the individuals to direct the course of the discussion in a manner that they would interact with each other as much as with me, and convey their narratives in their own words and in accordance with their own experiences and convictions. The benefits of this 'open' or 'freestyle' format are noted by Ann Gray²⁴⁴ in relation to both her own research and that of other feminists. Gray notes how the 'open-ended conversational interview' facilitates a style of interaction in which respondents can express their opinions spontaneously and in doing so are able to raise relevant topics and issues which the researcher may not have foreseen or probed for. The dynamics of the group discussion are commented on further in a subsequent section titled 'Relations between Researcher and Respondents' (see pp206-209).

The video followed a different format from the group discussion in that the participants did not interact with each other but spoke individually and directly to a camera. Five of the individuals who participated in the group discussion also contributed to the video. An additional four individuals were recruited to take part in this second stage of the empirical research. As with the group discussion those contributing to the video were invited to share their perceptions and experiences about *being* Muslim in Britain. In anticipation of the impersonal set up of speaking directly to camera the respondents were asked to give some prior thought to what they might want to say, and if they deemed it useful to make written notes. Some used prepared notes whilst others identified particular questions which I used to conduct short interviews. All the contributions are straight forward 'head and shoulder' shots filmed from the same tripod-fixed camera (a format similar to the conventional vox-box set-up). The idea for producing this visual record germinated in the course of organising the group discussion, and in particular relation to 'planning ahead' with regards to presenting the research findings. More specifically, I wanted to overcome the

²⁴⁴Video Playtime, (London, Routledge, 1992), chapter 1

'physical invisibility' of subjects in the post-fieldwork phase, something I now explain in more detail.

Addressing the invisibility of research subjects

In the vast majority of written and verbal accounts of empirical research the 'physical invisibility' of subjects is inevitable for the simple reason of protecting the identity of individuals. More often than not it is also not practical to pursue the inclusion of visual representation in that most social researchers do not have the necessary equipment and skills at their disposal. A more ethical consideration is that cameras and sound equipment may introduce unnecessary artificial elements to the interaction between subjects and their environment which in the end are more of a distraction and hindrance than providing additional empirical value to the study. Perhaps the prevalence of these points across much social science research is why the 'physical invisibility' of respondents in the post fieldwork stages has come to occupy the status of a 'silent presumption' devoid of any serious debate or review. Of course there remain numerous practical, ethical and moral reasons, such as the ones thus highlighted, why visual records may still be wholly inappropriate for the vast majority of empirical investigations. However, by delineating the benefits for my own study I hope to underline why there may be occasion to give serious consideration to the inclusion of visual material. Two points highlight the overall advantages for my own study.

The first point relates to Kobena Mercer's observation of how stereotypes that shore up dominant discourses on 'race' begin to breakdown when they are confronted with, not so much a 'monologic opposition' as a 'hybridized accentuation' of a plurality of voices and experiences²⁴⁵. In the present historical moment it is perhaps fair to suggest that Islam and Muslims are at the forefront of some of the most virulently phobic and stereotypical attitudes. 'There is crude colour racism, since most Muslims are perceived to have black or brown skins, and also anti-immigrant prejudice, since Muslims in Britain are perceived to have alien customs, specifically 'Asian' customs'²⁴⁶. With reference to dismantling this specifically British form of

²⁴⁵ Welcome to the Jungle, (London, Routledge, 1994)

²⁴⁶ The Runnymede Commission on British Muslims, Islamophobia. Its Features and Dangers, (London, The Runnymede Trust, 1997a), p12

'Islamophobia' I realised that some of the most thought provoking features of my study were visual. Most notably, the respondents were clearly differentiated by physical markers of 'race'. The sample included both white and black Muslims of African, Caribbean, Asian and English descent. In addition, the female respondents wearing hijab were clearly as articulate and confident as the male respondents as well as the women who did not 'cover'. Finally, the Western accents of those individuals who may have been deemed to fit the conventional images of the 'bearded male' and 'veiled female', firmly associated their identities with 'the West' as much as with Islam. Of course these differences could have been narrated both verbally and in writing, but Hanif Kureishi sums up what might have been lost when he comments, 'You can see people's faces in a way that you can't in a novel, because you have to imagine them through words. And the other thing is that you can see the scenes. You get [...] all the details, you know, [...] the clothes and the era. You couldn't write all that down'²⁴⁷. Kureishi's comments suggest that some physical markers are so firmly associated with stereotypes that they are just too difficult to dispel through the use of words.

A second advantage of including a visual record for my study was that it provided a more effective tool than verbatim quotes for displacing the locus of 'power' or 'authority' to speak from the researcher back on to the respondents. Ang underlines the importance of addressing this issue when she states, 'we should try to avoid a stance in which 'the audience' is relegated to the status of exotic 'other'- merely interesting in so far as 'we', as researchers, can turn 'them' into 'objects' of study, and about whom 'we' have the privileged position of acquiring 'scientific' knowledge'²⁴⁸. I felt this point to be doubly significant for the study on young Muslims, because as Anthias and Yuval-Davis argue, the issue of 'representation' has become particularly problematic with reference to marginalised or subordinated populations in that particular individuals or 'community leaders' are often singled out and assumed to be 'representative' of a whole 'community'²⁴⁹. By interspersing my

see also Steven Vertovec, 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain', in Muslims in the West, edited by Y. Yazbeck Haddad, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp19-35

²⁴⁷Laurence Chua, 'Double Feature', in Black Film Bulletin, Volume 2, Issue 3, (1994), p18

²⁴⁸Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996), p45

²⁴⁹see Chapter 6 in Racialised Boundaries, (London, Routledge, 1992)

presentations with audio-visual extracts of the respondents I hoped to underline the multitude of voices and subjectivities embedded within the data.

In summary, the objective of the video was not so much to replicate or extend the group discussion but to re-create an audio-visual presence of the respondents. I should emphasise that whilst it brought definite advantages by adding a visually provoking element to the overall study, I do not deem the video as enhancing the 'validity' or 'objectivity' of my study. Its production and use has been subject to as much editing and selection as the group discussion and so is open to all of the points of methodological scrutiny that might be directed at the latter.

Recruiting the Respondents

Across the two pieces of research a total of ten respondents were involved. I was very fortunate in recruiting the respondents in that an additional seven contacts 'snowballed' from the four personal approaches that I had initiated. Out of these eleven only one who was due to take part in the group discussion did not show up. Thus, the experience of sample recruitment, in this instance, was not plagued by 'blind alleys' as can so often be the case. I do not wish to detail the precise process of locating each and every respondent. However, to give some insight into my approach and to address its implications for the data elicited I describe the recruitment of one particular individual and the subsequent contacts attained.

I met the individual concerned whilst attending a seminar at the University of London. We had in fact met two years earlier when I had sat in the canteen of another university seeking individuals to participate in the audience survey. At that time she (Noshin) was an undergraduate and was now studying for her Masters. Both our meetings happened purely by chance brought about simply by being in the same place at the same time. In a small perhaps even tokenistic way, Noshin's participation in both pieces of research signifies some continuity between the two studies. The university 'setting' was central to our chance encounters and acquired a heightened significance for the recruitment of respondents for the study on young Muslims which needs to be highlighted.

When I met Noshin for the second time I mentioned my intentions of conducting a study on young Muslims and she expressed her interest in being involved. Some weeks later I phoned her indicating that I was now looking for individuals willing to take part in a small group discussion and asked if she would think about being involved. She confirmed that she was happy to contribute and asked if she could bring a friend. Her friend (Shagufta) was an undergraduate at the University of East London, where Noshin and I had first met. On the next occasion that I phoned in order to co-ordinate dates, Noshin's sister Ayesha answered the phone. Inevitably, we got talking about the research and she too expressed an interest in coming along. Ayesha was an undergraduate at the School of Oriental and African Studies. After the group discussion and in the course of organising the video, Ayesha provided another three contacts all of whom were attached to a higher educational establishment.

In delineating the unfolding of this particular line of contacts what I've tried to draw attention to is, firstly, how the respondents and I were essentially interconnected via a network of educational establishments and, secondly, that the university or higher educational 'setting' was a significant part in all of our lives at the time of research. The implications of this for the scope and limitations of the findings are addressed in the last section of the chapter (see pp211-213).

Relations between Researcher and Respondents

There is much debate about how best to conduct interviews. From a 'positivist' perspective the 'ideal' interview requires interviewers to remain 'neutral' at all times and to "switch off" their own personality and attitudes'²⁵⁰. The underlying argument behind this 'positivist' outlook, that respondents will react to the interviewers' attitudes and demeanour, is an important point to which all interviewers must remain alert. But in as much as all interviews are interaction situations, respondents will be influenced by a distant interviewer who shares few personal opinions as much as one who is overtly expressive about their personality and views. And it is difficult to see how one will necessarily elicit more 'objective' or 'valid' responses than the other in all interview situations.

²⁵⁰ Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, (London, Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1992), p66

Jean Converse and Howard Schuman²⁵¹ propose a very different approach for conducting interviews. They assert that interviewers need to achieve an appropriate balance between the contrasting roles of 'diplomat' and 'boor'. The 'diplomatic' role is important for establishing rapport and putting the respondent at ease. However, the purely 'diplomatic' interviewer can feel uneasy about asking questions that are personal or may create embarrassment. As such a degree of 'boorishness' is required where the interviewer is less concerned with 'pleasing' the respondent and so is unhindered at putting questions that may be deemed controversial or threaten rapport. Schuman and Converse come from the perspective that it is pointless for interviewers to occupy the role of 'neutral' observer because respondents are complex 'subjects'. Accordingly a complex and contradictory process needs to be engaged in order to get an insight into people's diverse attitudes and opinions.

Ang resolves to describe the contradictory nature of the research situation as a discursive process of interaction. From this position the results or findings presented in empirical studies are never definitive, but constitute historically and culturally specific forms of knowledge based on specific discursive encounters between the researcher and his/her informants. For Ang, rather than being concerned with defending the research 'validity' or 'accuracy' of the findings, the ultimate political responsibility of the researcher is to construct 'lived realities', not in the form of transparent reflections, but, in the form of interpretations²⁵².

From these various methodological projections it is possible to single out the views and opinions of informants as the single most important consideration that defines the role of any interviewer. As such the first and foremost challenge for the interviewer is to maintain the focus of the dialogue on the respondents and to 'keep them talking'. I might add that, in my own research, 'personality and attitude' were quite crucial in 'keeping them talking'. For example, there were times where I openly shared in the laughter of the group. At other times I expressed surprise at some of the experiences and information relayed. Still other times I openly spoke of my own experiences as

²⁵¹Conversations at Random, (Michigan, John Wiley & Sons, 1974)

²⁵²Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996), pp46-47

someone who had had a Muslim upbringing. All of these aspects might be viewed as contravening the 'non-controversial' and 'neutral' approach advocated by 'positivists'.

For my own part, my expressions of laughter, surprise and personal reflection were deployed, at times consciously and others unconsciously, to generate and contribute to an atmosphere of mutual respect and curiosity. In relation to this I would agree with Ang's observation that the subjectivity of the researcher is not separate from that of the respondents. In contributing my own experiences to the group discussion I simply came from the position that it was futile to deny the curiosity of the respondents, or try to suppress a particular level of identification I shared which would have been apparent through my familiarity with certain words such as 'molweesaab' and 'sabaq'. To have suppressed this intersubjectivity would have given cause for suspicion and distrust.

The atmosphere of 'mutual respect and curiosity' encouraged an open engagement with the various intersubjectivities present amongst the individuals participating in the group discussion. This impacted on the character and dynamics of the discussion in two quite distinct ways. Firstly, as the transcript (see Appendix E) illustrates, the respondents were interested in learning about each other's narratives as much as describing their own experiences and opinions. In fact, a significant number of questions are posed by the respondents to each other. Arising from this was a second equally significant implication for the group dynamics. As respondents posed questions to other respondents they effectively generated a sense in which each of them became positioned as the experts of their own knowledge and experiences. That they felt a degree of confidence in expressing their thoughts/curiosity openly and without the need for pleasing each other is highlighted by the fact that on a few occasions respondents disagreed with each other or posed questions to challenge other respondents' interpretations of certain events or practices. At times they also challenged my understanding of their relationship with Islam, as is conveyed in the following comment asserted by Ayesha in relation to the handout:

A: [...] I mean [holds up discussion handout drawing attention to title] you know Young British Muslims, you know is should the focus be on the British or should it be on the Muslim because it's just like for me I'm just a Muslim in Britain.

In as much as the vast majority of the dialogue is occupied by the respondents I might feel a good deal of success in fulfilling my objective of 'keeping them talking'. In addition, the discussion and video covered all of the topics indicated on the handout and touched on others that weren't. With respect to the latter the respondents made considerable comments about the appropriation of Islam in Muslim societies and the position of Muslim women. At the same time some of the topics were not covered in as much depth as others. Thus, the study constitutes a 'partial' reflection of the 'lived realities' of the respondents and I return to this point in the last section of the chapter.

Data Processing

The group discussion was transcribed using an adapted and shortened version of the Jefferson notation system which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Transcription Key

J:	initial identifies the person speaking
[]	words in square brackets provide additional/non-verbal information to either indicate the mood of interaction (e.g. [giggles]), or to clarify the context of dialogue (e.g. [referring to A])
=	equals sign denotes that there is no discernible gap between the end of one speaker's contribution and the start of another
[single square bracket indicates the beginning of overlapping dialogue

The original Jefferson notation system developed by Gail Jefferson²⁵³ is much more detailed than that presented in Table 2 and includes symbols denoting such varied

²⁵³For a comprehensive version see J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage, eds, Structures of Social Action, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984)

details as a rise or fall in vocal pitch, in-breath and out-breath, and timed pauses. This amount of detail, which ventures into notating differences in speech styles and emphasis on the use of certain words or phrases, was not deemed to add anything significant to my own analysis of the data. My examination of the data elicited was wholly focused on the content of the dialogue and the interaction between the respondents, and the notation symbols were selected accordingly.

In much social science research it is common practice to protect the identities of the respondents. In my study the respondents to the group discussion were offered the opportunity to remain anonymous but all waived this right, many of them indicating that there was nothing they had contributed that they would not be willing to defend publicly. As such I have made no attempt to change their names.

The transcript of the group discussion is presented in full in Appendix E and a copy of the video (DVD version) is included in Appendix F. Chapter 6 draws on verbatim quotes from both pieces of fieldwork. The original source of the respective quotes are indicated by the symbols * (which denotes an extract taken from the group discussion) and + (which denotes an extract taken from the video). In both instances I have edited out pauses and hesitations, such as 'ummh' or 'err', in order to present a more coherent read. I viewed such utterances as part of everyday language whose impact on the meanings of the words used, if any, could only be ratified by the speaker and so nothing significant is deemed to have been lost by editing them out.

Scope and Limitations of the Findings

The purpose of the group discussion and video was to generate qualitative data providing a detailed insight into individual negotiations of *being* Muslim. The use of small scale qualitative, or ethnographic, research methods might be recognised as being more aligned to the methodological stance adopted by many 'new' audience researchers (see pp15-17 and pp284-286). The video and group discussion, like many 'new' audience studies, do not constitute 'ethnographies' in the anthropological sense. If there is anything ethnographic about them it is in the context delineated by Shaun Moores, that they take seriously the interpretations of the media constructed by consumers (or in my case, the interpretations of Islam constructed by Muslims) in

their daily lives, whilst not being afraid to interrogate and situate their spoken accounts²⁵⁴. In this section I want to identify the key points defining the scope and limitations of the data from my study on young Muslims which is presented in chapter 6. Three points in particular should be borne in mind.

The first point relates to the method of sample recruitment used, i.e. the snowball technique. Robert Burgess proposes that a main advantage of snowball sampling is that it ‘follows the pattern of social relations in a particular setting and therefore the population in the sample involves individuals *and* relations among individuals’²⁵⁵. The respondents in my own study were strongly connected by kinship and friendship ties. For example, Noshin and Ayesha were sisters whilst Ishtiaq and Mustafa were both friends and fellow students at the same university. The benefits of such relations being represented in the sample is that the data elicited provides an altogether more detailed insight into the character and diversity of experiences of *being* Muslim amongst individuals who, because of their close relations, may be deemed to have a similar social and cultural outlook. Indeed Noshin and Ayesha who have grown up in the same family household relay very differing experiences about their past and present relations to Islam. Having said that this kind of clustered sample which is interconnected by close ties runs the risk of being over representative of individuals of particular backgrounds and under representative of others. This brings me to the second point about the profile of the respondents who took part in the group discussion and video.

Table 3 summarises the age, sex and family background of each respondent and also includes a column indicating the type of empirical contribution made by each individual.

Table 3: Respondents’ Profile

Name	Age	Sex	Ethnic and Religious Family Background	Empirical Contribution (*group discussion; +video)
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²⁵⁴Interpreting Audiences, (London, Sage, 1993), p5

Javed	21	M	Pakistani Muslim	*
Mustafa	24	M	white English Christian	* +
Ishtiaq	20	M	Pakistani Muslim	* +
Noshin	23	F	Pakistani Muslim	* +
Shagufta	21	F	Pakistani Muslim	* +
Ayesha	21	F	Pakistani Muslim	* +
Fatou	21	F	Gambian Muslim	+
Imran	20	M	Pakistani Muslim	+
Jameel	17	M	Caribbean Christian	+
Sulayman	25	M	white English Christian	+

As Table 3 confirms all the respondents who were of South Asian background came from Pakistan Muslim families. Thus, there are various other South Asian groupings that were represented in the audience survey (i.e. Indian, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi) who are wholly absent from the study on young Muslims. In addition, as has already been noted, at the time of research all the respondents were students at higher educational institutions. In that sense other narratives and experiences of *being* Muslim, such as those who have recently migrated or who may be uneducated/unemployed are not reflected in the findings. At the same time, it is necessary to remember that the commonality amongst the respondents of being higher education students, or being of Pakistani Muslim background, did not signify a coherent and unified Muslim identity. As will become clear in the next chapter their individual negotiations of Islam were fractured by various other axes of

²⁵⁵Robert Burgess, *In the Field*, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p55

differentiation including gender, culture, migration and family and 'community' relations.

Finally, as Ien Ang points out all empirical research is subject to a 'politics of interpretation' whereby the researcher does not simply uncover and relay 'objective truths', but, is engaged in a discursive process where he/she has to interpret certain 'constructions of reality' which have been conveyed in a particular historical moment²⁵⁶. My study on young Muslims constitutes a partial reflection of the everyday realities of the respondents in two specific ways. On the one hand its partiality is marked by the fact that it is, in the end, my particular interpretation of what the respondents told me. On the other hand its partiality needs to be additionally acknowledged in that what the respondents told was only a fraction of their 'lived realities' involving a process of selection and prioritisation of certain topics and events over others.

²⁵⁶Living Room Wars. (London, Routledge, 1996), pp46-47

Chapter 6

Experiences and Assertions of 'Difference'

Among Young Muslims

The empirical study presented in chapter 4, regarding South Asian audiences' use of popular/mainstream and Indian films on videotape, provided an insight into how multiple cultural locations may be reconciled within an individual's everyday life without seeming to disrupt racial and cultural hierarchies. The study thus emphasised that the defining feature of 'culturally hybrid' identities - of being able to interact and meld diverse cultural forms - does not guarantee an ability to forge racially transgressive cultural outlooks. My aim in this chapter is to extend the line of analysis begun in chapter 4 and further clarify the extent to which hybridity theorists' focus on culturally fragmented identities as a fundamental basis from which it becomes possible to overwhelm racial boundaries and inequalities may be misplaced or well founded.

The chapter takes as its focus my empirical research on young Muslims. As with the audience survey the study on young Muslims was undertaken in the early stages of this thesis in 1997. The findings from the study are therefore presented here retrospectively, but again from the perspective of what they convey about everyday modern experiences and negotiations of 'race' and culture.

The chapter is divided into three main sections which are linked together by the common theme of 'difference'. The first two sections are concerned with examining respondents' experiences and expressions of mutually exclusive conceptions of 'difference'. It is this 'difference' that is deemed to inhibit the transgressive capacity of 'cultural hybridity' in that the latter is dependent on the contestation and deconstruction of binary conceptions of identity formation²⁵⁷. These two sections offer an insight into differing circumstances in which 'Muslim' identities become situated and asserted in opposition to other identities. The first section analyses how Muslims are homogenised through racial stereotyping by non Muslims and begins by

²⁵⁷see for example, Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Black Film, British Cinema*, edited by K. Mercer, (London, ICA, 1988), pp27-31

identifying a process of racialisation specific to Britain which has established a 'common sense' understanding of Muslims in a manner that simultaneously supervenes and interweaves stereotypes of Asian. This scenario is illustrated by examining the empirical contributions of two non Asian respondents, Fatou and Mustafa, who describe how individuals outside of their immediate family find it difficult to acknowledge them as Muslims because of their non Asian backgrounds. Fatou and Mustafa's experiences are additionally shown to highlight how seemingly harmless ways of identifying Muslims, such as not handling pork, serve to perpetuate mutually exclusive conceptions of 'difference'. In more challenging circumstances such mutually exclusive frameworks for identifying Muslims are shown to evoke racially divisive relations as demonstrated by the shift in Mustafa's father-in-law's attitude, from being wholly accepting of Mustafa's conversion to Islam to denouncing Mustafa's desire to live in a more densely populated Muslim area. These findings are seen to reinforce Ali Rattansi's observation that modern identities are informed by a 'complex intertwining of racism and anti-racism'. Mustafa's narrative is seen to underscore that contemporary experiences and negotiations of *being* Muslim do not take place in a neutral space, but in a context more akin to Brah's conception of 'diaspora space' where the experience of 'race' and racism remains a defining feature.

The second section shifts focus from examining how dominant discourses homogenise Muslims to when Muslims themselves unite because of their common affiliation to Islam. The section distinguishes and examines in turn the comments of respondents affirming a neo-conservative or 'fundamentalist' politics which promotes an anti-modern, anti-western, anti-democratic and anti-feminist agenda²⁵⁸, and those whose political assertions are predominantly focused on challenging Islamophobia. With regards the former I examine the video contributions of Sulayman and Jameel both of whom are members of the 'fundamentalist' Muslim group Al-Muhajiroun²⁵⁹.

Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994)

²⁵⁸Haideh Moghissi, Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism, (London, Zed Books, 1999), p70

²⁵⁹Al-Muhajiroun has been the subject of much media attention both before and after September 11th and has been heavily criticised by both Muslims and non Muslims for its outwardly confrontational approach, which is often reported as being anti-western and anti-semitic (see for example the Channel 4 documentary *Tottenham Ayatollah*, broadcast on 8th April 1997). The group's own website claims that one of its aims is to establish Islam as a World Order (see www.almuhajiroun.com.pk).

A close examination of their comments reveals that the underlying impetus behind their support for a neo-conservative Muslim politics relates as much to racism directed at Muslims as it does to a homogenous conception of Islam. These observations are used to emphasise that the pernicious aspects of a neo-conservative Muslim politics can only be effectively resisted by developing a more complex approach, than hitherto, which on the one hand differentiates and accommodates its *legitimate* anger directed at racism, and on the other, opposes its divisive rhetoric which promotes a superior and holistic conception of Islam and Muslims. To address the first of these two points I identify and describe the respondents' mutual anger at the U.S. authorities for wrongly identifying Muslims as the perpetrators for the 'Oklahoma bombing'²⁶⁰ as an example of Muslim unity against Islamophobia. I go on to relate such instances of unity to Paul Gilroy's notion of anti-anti-essentialism which emphasises that whilst ethnically absolute forms of identification must be resisted, it is important to maintain some notion of a 'shared essence' to be able to coordinate an effective opposition to ongoing racialised forms of power and subordination. On the basis of these observations I propose that solidarity amongst Muslims be read in the context of what Hall calls 'identity politics one' in as much as it is overwhelmingly held together and defined by the struggle against racism. I then return to address the issue of how to confront and challenge the divisive features integral to Islamic 'fundamentalism'. In doing so I also make a decisive shift in the focus of discussion from examining manifestations of unified notions of Islam and Muslims to contesting the diversity of Muslim identities and subjectivities. This shift is introduced in the context of Hall's conception of the 'politics of representation' which he identifies as an engagement with the multiple experiences and subjectivities that constitute holistic categories such as 'black' or 'Muslim', and which he regards as essential to breaking the cycle of racial conflicts. By comparing the formal and somewhat rhetorical contributions of Jameel and Sulayman with the more informal and personal reflections of two other members of Al-Muhajiroun, Ayesha and Imran, I argue that the real value of a 'politics of representation' lies in its emphasis on

²⁶⁰The event known as the 'Oklahoma bombing' involved a truck bomb which destroyed a federal building in Oklahoma City on April 19th 1995 and killed 168 people. The U.S. authorities initially identified terrorist organisations from the Middle East as the perpetrators, but after more detailed investigations arrested Timothy McVeigh, a white American male. He was convicted and later executed by lethal injection on June 11th 2001.

engaging individual experiences and subjectivities which encourage the vocalisation of internal group differences that, in turn, make it possible to challenge established or 'official' norms, practices and meanings.

The third section of the chapter extends my analysis of the 'politics of representation' into the respondents' personal experiences and negotiations of Islam. The discussion specifically focuses on individuals of South Asian background who include Javed, Ishtiaq, Noshin, Imran, Ayesha and Shagufta. My examination identifies a transformation in the respondents' experiences of Islam whereby, the very issues that had provoked feelings of enmity towards Islam in childhood, such as the use of corporal punishment in mosques, have in more recent years been renegotiated by the respondents as going against the teachings of Islam. This process of reinterpretation of the teachings of Islam is described as resembling what Bhabha calls the 'act of cultural translation' through which 'newness enters the world'²⁶¹. This connection is qualified by an acknowledgement that amongst the respondents, like many Muslims, there is an undeniable and explicit foregrounding of Islam as their primary axis of identification. To make sense of these complex dynamics of identity negotiation I draw upon Gilroy's contestation of the term 'authenticity' through which he describes how the theme of connectedness may be maintained without connoting a fixed essence. The discussion then turns to assess the possibilities of racially transgressive change to emerge from the respondents' narratives. I note how many of the respondents actively resist the nationalistic tendencies integral to their parents' identities which include such expectations as marrying, not just any Muslim but, a Muslim who shares the same country of origin. This integral aspect of the respondents' negotiations of *being* Muslim is seen to resemble Hall's description of a positive conception of ethnicity in which ethnicity is 'decoupled' from nationalism. Crucially, unlike Hall's conception in which 'decoupling' is achieved via interaction with multiple co-ordinates of identity, the respondents negotiate more anti-nationalist and racially inclusive Muslim identities by foregrounding the teachings of Islam over all other sources of identification. Here 'location' overrides the 'play of difference' in the respondents' narratives. I argue that the prominence of the dynamic of 'location' within the respondents' narratives is best understood in the context of Brah's

conception of a 'politics of location' which is not driven by a desire to reinvent the 'past', but by the need to establish some kind of positioning in order to challenge established meanings, norms and codes of behaviour. To round off my interrogation of the respondents' narratives for their capacity to bring about racially transgressive change I consider the contributions of the female respondents, Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta, and assess their interactions with the veil/hijab for the way in which they challenge or condone conventional gender roles and inequalities. The discussion notes how the women's interaction with the veil corresponds with Gilroy's description of a 'changing same' in that the veil, like Gilroy's example of the twelve inch single, acquires new meaning and significance as it transits different social and cultural contexts. Moreover, the women's narratives challenge us to understand how within the same historical moment the veil can be a form of female oppression in one part of the world and a form of female empowerment in another part of the world. The dynamics through which the veil is able to have such contrasting impacts on women's lives is made sense of by applying Gilroy and Rattansi's observations that modern identities must be understood and contested within non-linear conceptions of time and space.

I conclude the chapter by summarising the overall patterns emerging from the empirical data, and present the respondents' interaction with Islam as constituting two phases. I describe these phases as the 'distanciation from Islam' which relates to their childhood experiences, and an 'embracement of Islam' which is specific to their more recent history. Both these phases I suggest share a similarity in that they are characterised by a discourse of rationality and more specifically by what Rattansi describes as a 'heightened reflexivity' in which multiple cultural perspectives interact to create a tension between order and chaos. My identification of the discourse of rationality within the respondents' narratives positions Muslim identities as being distinctly modern in that rationality is a defining feature of modernity. On the basis of this connection the discussion ends by asserting that far from being remnants of a pre-modern past, contemporary Muslim identities predicated on the teachings of Islam can be usefully read as providing an insight into the dynamics and internal contradictions of modernity as well as 'cultural hybridity'.

²⁶¹ 'How Newness Enters the World', in *The Location of Culture*, (London, Routledge, 1994), pp212-

The Racialisation of Muslims in Britain

As was noted in the last chapter (see p198), the vast majority of the estimated 1.5 million Muslims in Britain have migrated from or have ancestral roots in the subcontinent, most notably in Pakistan, with significant numbers from India and Bangladesh. In fact Muslims of South Asian origin are estimated to account for 80% of the British Muslim population. The other 20% is largely composed of individuals with origins in the Middle East, Africa, Malaysia, Turkey and Cyprus²⁶². The predominance of Muslims of South Asian background has been transfigured in the national racial imaginary in a manner which readily confuses prejudice against Asians with prejudice against Muslims.

In the past, coverage of and debates about British Muslims within mainstream British discourses was likely to be subsumed under the category 'Asian'. Since the end of the Cold War attention has very much shifted to religious affiliation, in a manner akin to what Anthias and Yuval-Davis describe as a process of racialisation through which racist stereotypes of Asians have become integral to racist stereotypes of Muslims²⁶³. Thus, at the same time that religion has been foregrounded as the focus for anti-Muslim feelings, constructions of 'Asian' and 'immigrant' through which Muslims in Britain had been previously understood have not become redundant nor lost their significance. As the findings of the Runnymede Commission on British Muslims suggest, interwoven into Islamophobic discourse in Britain is not just a hatred of Asian customs, but also a hatred of Arabs, the Middle East, immigrants and a ridiculing of anti-racist initiatives²⁶⁴. The centrality of stereotypes of 'Asian' within this trend is highlighted by the experiences of non Asian Muslims such as Fatou who,

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²⁶²see Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp10-26
The Runnymede Commission on British Muslims, *Islamophobia a Challenge for Us All*, (London, The Runnymede Trust, 1997b), pp13-19
see Steven Vertovec, 'Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain', in *Muslims in the West*, edited by Y. Yazbeck Haddad, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp19-35

²⁶³*Racialised Boundaries*, (London, Routledge, 1992), see chapter 2, pp 21-60

²⁶⁴Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia, Its Features and Dangers*, (London, The Runnymede Trust, 1997a)

as I now show, describes how her indigenous counterparts find it difficult to accept her as Muslim because of her African background.

The exclusion of non Asian narratives in dominant conceptions of Muslim

The close association of 'Muslim' with 'Asian' has meant that non Asian Muslims are often excluded from national debates and media representations. As Fatou, who is of Gambian Muslim parentage, explains:

+F: I don't really identify with any of the images that you get in the media because they're always more or less about Asian Muslims and you don't really see nothing about the African Caribbean Muslims or even the white Muslims.

For individuals like Fatou the embeddedness of notions of Asian within dominant perceptions of Muslims has inflicted a level of religious invisibility outside of her home environment. She describes how a hesitant acceptance of her religious background amongst fellow staff members and customers means that she has to constantly alert them to her Muslim status. For example, she recounts:

+F: People assume that I'm not Muslim, [...] I work in Sainsbury's on the dinner counter and most of the stuff they sell is pork. And when customers ask me I have to tell them to taste the stuff because I don't eat pork, and they say, 'Well why is that?' And even my co-workers, no matter how long I've been working there they still can't believe that I'm Muslim. Which is quite strange really [laughs].

This example may be construed to be harmless enough. Certainly Fatou does not see a negative impact on her life emanating from the need to constantly remind people of her religious identity. Nor does she convey any sense of anger or irritation. If anything she is mildly amused by her co-workers' inability to retain the point that she is unable to handle or taste pork because she is a Muslim. However, the subtle and seemingly harmless situation experienced by Fatou illustrates how specific characteristics become singled out and interwoven into stereotypical caricatures. For example, Fatou's religious affiliation becomes a point of interaction around an issue, not

handling pork, which is deemed to fall outside of the boundaries of what is seen to be the 'norm'. Of course there is much more to being Muslim than avoiding contact with pork and much that is perhaps in synch with 'English Christian' lifestyles. But, for her co-workers and customers 'not handling pork'²⁶⁵ has become a defining feature of Fatou's Muslim status and is illustrative of how Muslim identities in Britain are circumscribed through mutually exclusive conceptions of difference.

Circumscribing Muslim identities through mutually exclusive conceptions of difference

We might infer from Fatou's account that it is pre-dominantly those characteristics 'alien' to the indigenous population that provide the focal points, or precursors, for interaction with Muslims. 'Difference' in this context can be identified as functioning in the *oppositional* sense of the term, that is as distinct irreconcilable entities. And it is worth emphasising that in this instance a mutually exclusive notion of difference is not invoked by the Muslim individual concerned, but by her non Muslim counterparts. Further this *oppositional* context is only maintained by resisting or filtering out all detail that invites more complex conceptions of the subject in question. To return to Fatou's account, when her work colleagues are confronted with evidence that is contrary to dominant images which associate Muslims as being of Asian origin, they automatically and persistently resist it. In their minds Fatou's African background clearly functions to mask her Muslim identity. Hence her comment, "no matter how long I've been working there they still can't believe that I'm Muslim".

The selective way in which Fatou's work colleagues interact with her Muslim status, focussing on such aspects of her behaviour as 'not handling pork', raises an important point regarding Hall's suggestion that for migrant political struggles to be more effective in challenging persisting inequalities, it is necessary to organise around a 'new' politics of difference which exposes and responds to the multitude of subjectivities encompassed by specific categories such as black. Fatou's account

²⁶⁵It is worth pointing out that on the issue of pork there is no universal observance amongst Muslims. Some argue that 'avoiding pork' is not a requirement of being a Muslim but has been mistaken as such because at the time of the Prophet's life pork was banned from consumption due to a disease carried by pigs.

highlights that the effectiveness of such a politics - what Hall calls a 'politics of representation' (see pp70-71) - is as much dependent on the ability of indigenous Western populations to acknowledge and interact with the diversity of migrant voices as it is on the migrant's assertion of the complexity and heterogeneity of his/her identity. I return to discussion of this issue in more detail at the end of section two, where I also address its implications for the transgressive capacity of 'cultural hybridity' (see pp239-246). Here it is useful to point out that, quite apart from her African background, Fatou challenges the conventional stereotypes of 'Muslim' women in other ways. She doesn't cover her hair, she wears 'western' clothes and she comes across as highly articulate with a sense of self confidence. By her own admission she is not a 'devout' Muslim. But she is nevertheless a Muslim. And once popular conceptions of what constitutes a Muslim begin to include the less 'conventional' identities of individuals like Fatou it becomes increasingly difficult to contain 'Islam' and 'Muslims' within a racially and culturally enclosed framework.

The manner of Fatou's co-workers' interaction with her Muslim identity indicates how racial boundaries are often maintained in subtle and non-confrontational ways. To extend understanding of how these dynamics impact on the process of racial interaction in negotiations of *being* Muslim in Britain I want to introduce the experiences of another non Asian respondent, Mustafa, which supports Rattansi's observation of how racism is often intertwined with anti-racism. This aspect of Mustafa's narrative is additionally interesting for its insight into how 'race' and racism can very easily begin to *overtake* individual experiences and negotiations of *being* Muslim.

The intertwining of racism and anti-racism and its impact on 'being' Muslim

At the time my empirical research was conducted, only a couple of years had passed since Mustafa had converted to Islam. His white English Christian family background means that he still occupied a racial status markedly different to all but one other respondent - Sulayman. Mustafa recounts how, since converting to Islam, he has become much more conscious of the privileged position afforded by his outwardly 'English' appearance:

***M:** I changed my name to Mohammed and you'll be amazed you know if you're talking to someone on the phone and say 'yeah my name is Mustafa Mohammed', then they meet you and you know the treatment is totally different. And I was kind of like the weirdest thing, I never thought that this would happen to me that I was actually witnessing racism. [...] once I was going for jobs, part time jobs, and I was gonna get two application forms one with my old name and one with my new name on and see what ones I would get an interview for. I wasn't even getting interviews for Tesco's, year before I could you know go to Tesco's and you know get a job straight away. It's it really got to that stage [laughs].

Thus, whilst his name has become the likely cause for more cold or distant attitudes and even acts of discrimination, Mustafa's physical features tend to override the 'alien' marker signified by his Muslim name. When meeting people face to face he still enjoys the type of *neutral* relations to which he was wholly accustomed before his conversion to Islam. But, as he later clarifies, at the point where people have to interact with the seriousness of his engagement with Islam their attitude can often become distant and racist. With respect to this Mustafa describes the dramatic shift in his father-in-law's disposition:

***M:** I hope my own father-in-law never hears this tape [group laughs] but I've like known him for two or three years and he has a very, they both come from a Quaker background so they have a liberal 'oh we accept everyone' kind of attitude. But essentially it's Christian based and he was all very accepting and you know when my wife changed her name he was really quite okay about it. You know and on face value they were really accepting of us. It came about maybe about four months ago I'd actually arranged to move to London to be near Finsbury Park mosque. And this all fell through anyway but whilst this was going on my father-in-law was ringing me up and saying 'you're endangering my daughter's life, you've brainwashed her, you're going to brainwash your daughter', you know all the truth came out, from this liberal point view turned into this nasty, fascist [...] [group laugh loudly] you know.

It would appear that the initial reaction of Mustafa's father-in-law is very much a conditional acceptance of his daughter and son-in-law's conversion to Islam. Conditional in that whilst they are living within a suburban predominantly white community he is still able to accept them as 'one of us'. The shift to a more contemptuous attitude is not based on an assessment of the precise danger that Mustafa's religious views might pose to his daughter and granddaughter. The shift is simply in response to their plans to move to an area where they may have more ready access to a mosque and to other Muslim people. Thus, for his father-in-law, Mustafa's adoption of a Muslim lifestyle is okay as long as Mustafa's 'community' ties remain unchanged. The decision to live amongst or near a Muslim community is the moment when Mustafa is seen to be *disloyal*, the moment when he is seen to cross the *boundary* from being 'one of us' to being 'one of them', and the moment when *being* Muslim is deemed to be 'alien', dangerous and corrupting.

Mustafa's encounter with the contradiction in his father-in-law's attitude supports two particular insights into the dynamics of modern relations highlighted by Rattansi and Brah respectively. The first is that, as Ali Rattansi notes, modern relations are defined by a complex intertwining of racism and anti-racism (see pp107-108). Racism itself is therefore contradictorily experienced and not so easily distinguished as a wholly separate entity from anti-racism. This is characteristic of the reaction of Mustafa's father-in-law, whose initial response can be deemed anti-racist in its acceptance of Mustafa's conversion to Islam. By comparison, his subsequent more hostile reaction can be aligned to the position of racists most notably for affirming a firm racial boundary between a white 'civilised' community and a 'dangerous' Muslim community.

As I have argued elsewhere, in Britain the intertwining of racist and anti-racist discourses pervades everyday relations in contexts as vastly different as the atmosphere on football terraces²⁶⁶ to party political strategies for canvassing the 'ethnic' vote²⁶⁷. In that sense the commingling of racist and anti-racist discourses must

²⁶⁶Bilkis Malek, 'A Game of Two Halves', in *Soundings*, Issue 10, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), pp145-156

²⁶⁷Bilkis Malek, 'Not Such Tolerant Times', in *Soundings*, Issue 6, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), pp140-151

be recognised as a centrally defining feature of modern experiences and subjectivities, and as such needs to be unravelled for its specific impact on the cultural politics of Muslims. This is my concern in the next section, when I argue that a failure to appreciate the contradictory experiences of racism has meant that a blind submission to Islam, as opposed to challenging Islamophobia, has been wrongfully identified as the basis for Muslim unity during such events as the 'Rushdie affair' (see pp229-246). As Mustafa's experiences suggest, for many Muslims racism begins to *overtake* anti-racism in defining their overall experiences of living in the West and their encounter with Western modernity in particular. For example, once Mustafa becomes subjected to the racial prejudice of his father-in-law it becomes difficult to maintain his father-in-law's earlier, or indeed any subsequent, tendency towards a liberal anti-racist position as being genuine.

The second insight into modern relations provided by Mustafa's experiences relates to Avtar Brah's notion of 'diaspora space', in which the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is a native (see pp86-88). When his father-in-law objects to Mustafa's plans to move his family to a more populated Muslim area, Mustafa himself becomes a victim of 'white' racism. Experiences like this, as with those relating to his search for a job, provide Mustafa with a dual insight into white English identity, in that he is simultaneously positioned both inside and outside white English identity. In the same way that the migrant's 'sense of self' becomes fractured and decentred, Mustafa too undergoes the 'loss of a stable sense of self' as he is drawn to confront and deal with the racism directed at him. I return to the notion of the 'native becoming a diasporian' in the conclusion of the thesis, where I argue that theorising 'cultural hybridity' from the position of the native is crucial for a more comprehensive assessment of its racially transgressive potential (see pp309-311). Here I want to explore Mustafa's narrative a little further to identify its ability to offer alternative 'routes' than those signposted by the process of racialisation for narrating and contesting Muslim identities.

Alternative 'routes' for contesting Muslim identities

Mustafa's contribution to the group discussion and video indicates that his engagement with Islam bears little resemblance to that imagined by his father-in-law and conveyed through such words as 'brainwashed' and 'endanger'. As Mustafa explains, his own interest in Islam began while on a trip to India which he had specifically undertaken to learn more about yoga and Hinduism. During the trip he ended up living with a Muslim family in Kashmir, an experience which he views as his first real introduction to Islam. His decision to become a Muslim was by no means instant. In fact it wasn't for another two years after his stay in Kashmir, and while working in Scotland, that he converted. Two other points about Mustafa's embracement of Islam are worth mentioning. Firstly, although his relationship with his wife predated his conversion to Islam his decision to convert was taken independently of her. Secondly, he did not declare his own commitment to Islam with the expectation that his wife would automatically follow suit. With respect to her decision to convert, he explains:

***M:** She wasn't a Muslim. And she didn't come to it for more than a year after I'd been Muslim and I didn't pressurise her into becoming Muslim. She came to it herself. Obviously, you know I was studying Islam had pieces of paper on the floor where I was trying to learn [giggles] and I guess you know that affected her.

It is impossible to comment on how long Mustafa's relationship with his wife would have survived had she not converted. But what can be stated with certainty is that their respective conversion to Islam is highly personal to them, both on an individual level and as a couple charting a life together. In that sense they do not fit popular stereotypes in that neither has been influenced by an affiliation to, or sympathy with, an 'extremist' group. Nor by having a social network of Muslim friends. Nor indeed, for the sake of pleasing the in-laws. It is perhaps also worth pointing out that, as a couple, Mustafa and his wife had experienced a wholly different lifestyle before their decisions to become Muslim. This is conveyed by Mustafa in the group discussion by sharing moments such as the following:

***M:** My wife (and I) were watching a programme on ecstasy and it was hilarious because we were sat there going to each other, 'that was us once, we used to be like that' [group laughs]. It was you know it was really weird.

Examples such as the above dispel the 'no fun' and wholly 'formal' image of Muslim couples and Muslim homes. Some might argue that Mustafa and his wife were well acquainted in a very different and informal context before their adoption of a 'Muslim' lifestyle and so cannot be taken as the 'norm'. To adopt this line of interpretation is to follow Mustafa's father-in-law and invoke a mutually exclusive conception of difference which sifts out anything that does not fit the stereotype. Whereas, if we take Mustafa and his wife's religious quest seriously and in the personalised context conveyed by Mustafa, then we are forced to review the context in which we situate and contest Muslim identities. It is then that it becomes possible to track the 'play of difference', as theorised by hybridity theorists, which emphasises that identities are not pre-given but are under constant negotiation and review. This point is the focus of discussion in the third section of this chapter (see pp246-273). Here I want to draw out two particular dynamics from Mustafa's account which suggest that the experience of *being* Muslim is not defined by a set of rules and regulations which all Muslims follow 'blindly' and in uniform fashion.

On the one hand, Mustafa's account presents the experience of *being* Muslim as being peculiar to the individual who negotiates the teachings of Islam within the context of his/her own particular situation and personal needs. So, for example, when Mustafa makes the decision to convert he does not perceive his status as a Muslim compromised by being in a relationship with a non Muslim partner and vice versa. Rather, he is able to maintain both at the same time. Moreover, when we take into account Mustafa's lifestyle prior to his conversion, and also that there was no family or peer pressure to convert, we have to accept the capacity of Islam to be a guiding source which individuals at their own will can find to be a positively fulfilling experience, without distancing or severing ties with non Muslims. In Mustafa's case, his primary attraction to Islam was related to a desire to establish a stable family environment. He states:

+M: The strength of the family is very important to me [...] I come from a broken family but I've seen a Pakistani or Asian family as Muslim families and they're very strong [...] and I think because the children are brought up in an Islamic manner they're so much stronger and the love in the family is so much stronger than I felt [...]. I'm sure that, you know, if there was any statistics on it I should think that there are less Muslim children that swear at their parents and storm out of the house than there is, you know, western children.

Of course it would be wrong to conclude from Mustafa's comments that within every Muslim home resides a 'happy family'. In fact, within the group discussion some individuals share some very negative experiences about the way in which their parents and molwees appropriated Islam in the home and mosque respectively (see pp247-261). However, narratives like Mustafa's signal very different 'routes' through which to engage and evaluate the ethical qualities of Islam. His dialogue with the teachings of Islam is primarily about building an atmosphere of 'love', and long lasting relations of 'respect' within the home which present very different contexts for situating Muslim lifestyles than 'subjugation' and 'subordination'. In engaging these alternative 'routes' we begin to break the process of racialisation through which Muslims have been dehumanised. This is precisely my concern in the third section of this chapter where I examine the narratives of South Asian Muslims and highlight how their personalised accounts challenge dominant representations which project Muslims as submitting to a set of beliefs that are pre-modern, barbaric, irrational and incapable of contributing to the 'progress' of modern societies. This brings me to the second dynamic shaping Mustafa's experience of *being* Muslim.

As Mustafa's account shows, Muslim experiences are significantly influenced by the characteristics of interaction with other people. So, for example, Mustafa's feelings and awareness of *being* Muslim are significantly defined by his father-in-law's prejudice, which generates a sense of upset and anger. And these feelings specifically revolve around *being* Muslim. Mustafa's mother too places little positive value on his engagement with Islam. She perhaps does not express this in the same openly antagonistic terms as Mustafa's father-in-law, but as Mustafa recounts in the group discussion:

***M:** All through my teenage life I had this struggle and had my parents going, “You shouldn’t smoke you shouldn’t do this”.

|

A: Yeah [laughs]

M: And in fact now I think my mum would rather that I sat there and drank beer and smoked. She would feel more comfortable with that [group laugh] than me sitting there not drinking not smoking you know.

Mustafa’s experiences highlight that *being* Muslim involves a process of interaction that constantly requires you to justify your beliefs and challenge the low sense of human worth accorded to you. The pervasiveness of this trend is captured by writers such as Marfleet and Bjorgo, who identify the political elites of the West as the source for the spread of Islamophobia which features centrally in their respective civilising missions to create a pan-continental identity that is defined against the cultures of ‘others’ - principally Muslims²⁶⁸. The effect of such dynamics on individuals like Mustafa is to heighten their sense of *being* Muslim in an acrimonious context. It is important to appreciate the full implications of this state of affairs because they have been central to keeping alive the current cycle of conflicts between ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’ - a situation I now describe in more detail.

Deconstructing Muslim Unity

The two dynamics highlighted in Mustafa’s experiences stress the need to situate and understand Muslim identities via interpretative frameworks foregrounding a fluid, as opposed to mutually exclusive, conception of ‘difference’. The importance of doing so goes beyond the need to break down the racialisation process that has presented Muslims as a homogenous and backward people. It is additionally important, as I now argue in this section, in squeezing out the possibilities for Muslims to define

²⁶⁸Phil Marfleet, ‘Europe’s Civilising Mission’, in New Ethnicities, Old Racisms, edited by P. Cohen, (London, Zed Books, 1999), pp18-36
Tore Bjorgo, ‘The Invaders’, ‘the Traitors’ and ‘the Resistance Movement’’, in The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe, edited by T. Modood & P. Werbner, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp54-72

themselves in mutually exclusive terms. I address this challenge in this section by distinguishing and examining in turn the dynamics of unity among members of 'fundamentalist' Muslim groups and the dynamics of unity among 'ordinary' Muslims. In this section I also begin to introduce and assess the five main arguments made by Bhabha and Said in their examinations of the cultural politics of Muslims (see pp54-60).

My analysis begins by discussing Jameel and Sulayman's video contributions as examples of the 'fundamentalist' position, which I suggest has complex 'roots' in that its anti-western and anti-democratic rhetoric is intertwined with anti-racist objectives.

The complex 'roots' of Islamic 'fundamentalism'

As noted in the introduction, Jameel and Sulayman are both members of the London based group Al-Muhajiroun, which can be described as supportive of a 'fundamentalist' Muslim politics in its commitment to promoting Islam as the solution to the problems faced by both Muslims and non Muslims and establishing it as a World Order²⁶⁹. Jameel and Sulayman's contributions can be described as markedly different from the other participants, in that they are visibly formal and depersonalised in a number of respects. For example, they both make direct eye contact with the camera lens whereas the gaze of the other participants is focused slightly to the right of the lens. The reason for this is that each individual was given the choice of either speaking directly to the camera without any involvement from me, or have me stand next to the camera posing the occasional question (on topics identified by them) or prompt to start/maintain dialogue. Only Sulayman and Jameel chose the former. Similarly, while most respondents had thought about what they wanted to say and used written notes during filming, only Sulayman and Jameel seemed to stick rigidly to what they had written.

With respect to the content of their contributions, two particular characteristics stand out. Firstly, although they address different issues both of them place an emphasis on explaining and justifying the 'doctrines' of Islam. Secondly, both utilise a very impersonal and formal register. For instance, Jameel devotes his attention to

²⁶⁹see www.almuhajiroun.com.pk

describing Islam as a “deen”. This he explains posits Islam not as a religion but as a “complete system” providing guidance on all aspects of human life including social, economic, political as well as spiritual. He goes on to refer to Allah as a “perfect source” which makes his system for mankind free of contradiction and error. Throughout his piece Jameel makes no references to personal experiences and so his defence of Islam does present itself as something that has been learnt ‘parrot fashion’.

The focus of Sulayman’s contribution is the pejorative coverage of Islam presented by the media. As an example, he refers to the wholly negative reporting of the Taliban and the specific criticisms levelled against the closing of women and children’s schools in Afghanistan. He puts forward the view that the Taliban were justified in their actions because they had not closed the schools with the intention of controlling and disempowering sections of their population, as suggested by the media, but had done so in the context of having to declare a state of emergency. For Sulayman, the adverse portrayal of Islamic ruling parties, whom he refers to as the “truth carriers”, is an indication that the West feels threatened by Islam and its potential to become a “superpower”.

Like Jameel, Sulayman’s account also projects an engagement with Islam that is void of internal criticism and differentiation. His use of the phrase “truth carriers” resembles Jameel’s use of “perfect source”. Both propose a holistic and undifferentiated conception of Islam and Muslims. They also situate Islam in ‘oppositional’ and ‘superior’ terms. Further, Sulayman’s defence of the Taliban is exemplary of the kind of neo-conservative politics identified by Haideh Moghissi in which, ‘denouncing racist Islamophobia in the West becomes intertwined with an uncritical acceptance of brutal Islamist states’²⁷⁰. With specific reference to the Taliban, even allowing for the most biased media coverage, it is difficult for anyone committed to human freedom from subordination and oppression to defend the practices of that regime. The narratives of Sulayman and Jameel provide an appropriate context for contesting two of the five points of criticism integral to Bhabha and Said’s commentaries of the cultural politics of Muslims. They include, firstly, that Islam and Muslims are racially bounded, and secondly, that the recreation

²⁷⁰Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism, (London, Zed Books, 1999), p46

of a shared 'past' through an irrational and uncritical devotion to Islam is a basis for Muslim unity. These two observations are intertwined in the work of Bhabha and Said, in that both suggest, in subtly different ways, that it is precisely the recreation of a shared 'past' that contains Muslim identities within racially bounded social networks. For Bhabha the scenario is characterised by a desire to live the modern age through a reinvention of the 'past', a situation he describes as 'the quarrel of the ancient (ascriptive) migrants' (see pp44-46). For Said, that many Muslims remain loyal to essentialist conceptions of Islam represents a situation where the governing elites of the Muslim world have succeeded in presenting the unequal relations of power and subordination in mutually exclusive terms, 'through the inadequate banners of 'Islam' and 'the West'' (see pp46-49).

There is much about the character and content of Jameel and Sulayman's video contributions which substantiates the critical position advanced by Bhabha and Said. For example, the parrot fashion manner through which Jameel presents Islam as a "perfect system" fits Bhabha's description of a 'fundamentalist' politics as lacking critical dialogue or rationale. This is further endorsed by the fact that a total submission to Islam is presented by Jameel as affording Muslims the moral high ground. This type of non-critical relationship with Islam is identified by Said as nurturing a political sensibility on which brutal Islamic regimes thrive and rely for popular support. A clear illustration of this is Sulayman's defence of the closure of women and children's schools under the Taliban. However, leaving aside for the moment the point that Jameel and Sulayman's appropriations of Islam are not representative of all Muslims, I want to question the validity of Said and Bhabha's commentaries in the context of Jameel and Sulayman's ancestral history.

Jameel and Sulayman, and for that matter Mustafa, disrupt the thinking behind Bhabha and Said's understanding of Muslim identities in that their lineal origins are non Muslim. We might concede some social affinity between Jameel's black Caribbean background and that of Muslims in that there is a common experience of subordination under colonial rule. But there do not appear to be any obvious features of Sulayman and Mustafa's genealogical history that connect them with the social and

historical predicament of Muslims. Thus, with respect to the 'Islam' versus 'West' analogy, Sulayman and Mustafa's white English Christian backgrounds suggest that in converting to Islam they have in fact switched 'loyalties'. In that sense Muslim solidarity cannot simply be reduced to a desire to recreate the 'past', because a shared history or past doesn't necessarily exist. The kind of neo-conservative rhetoric embedded in Sulayman and Jameel's comments may serve to mask this fact. Indeed some might argue that if Muslim converts can be shown to practice and defend a homogenous, pre-modern conception of Islam, then that a 'shared past' does not exist becomes irrelevant. However, my point is that if a 'shared past' does not exist, then there must be some other, or additional, source, or precursor that generates and maintains a sense of feeling or emotion through which the cultural politics of individuals like Sulayman and Jameel become allied to a neo-conservative agenda.

If we reflect on the context in which Sulayman defends the Taliban, i.e. the defamatory media coverage of Islam, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the process of racialisation provides a fundamental source for canvassing support and a sense of legitimacy for a neo-conservative politics. This is not to say that the racialisation process is the sole influential factor behind an individual's empathy with a neo-conservative position. But the fundamental problem with Bhabha and Said's interpretation of Muslim unity through concepts such as 'blind patriotism' and 'irrational fundamentalism' is that they distract attention away from the racialisation process and place the focus back on to Islam and Muslims. This weakness is reinforced in the next subsection. An added problem with Said and Bhabha's respective interpretations is that, by constructing their arguments on events such as the street demonstrations during the 'Rushdie affair', they have effectively blurred the boundary between a neo-conservative politics and the kind of Muslim solidarity specifically aimed at challenging Islamophobic discourse.

The preceding discussion suggests that what is in fact required is a critical position or framework which is able to engage the politics of Islamic 'fundamentalism' with a level of complexity that, on the one hand, differentiates and challenges its complacency towards practices of subordination and oppression, and on the other is able to support and re-route its struggle against racism and the process of racialisation.

The first of these two challenges is addressed at the end of this section (see pp239-246). My immediate concern here is to identify how to comprehend and support Muslim solidarity specifically organised to counter the effects of racist Islamophobia. A useful starting point from which to do this is, as I now illustrate, provided by Paul Gilroy's notion of anti-anti-essentialism.

Muslim solidarity and the case for anti-anti-essentialism

While Gilroy, like other hybridity theorists, believes that ethnically absolute conceptions of identity have no role in a racially transgressive cultural politics, he advocates an anti-anti-essentialist position in response to the fact that as long as racism persists it can only be effectively opposed by maintaining some notion of unity or 'shared essence'. Gilroy adds that such a 'shared essence' does not require belief in a homogenous conception of identity but is made possible by implicit feelings of solidarity arising from common experiences (see p90). This is a much more suitable framework than Bhabha's 'blind patriotism' or Said's 'irrational fundamentalism' for understanding public expressions of unity amongst Muslims during such events as the 'Rushdie affair' and can be illustrated by drawing on empirical evidence from the group discussion.

When The Satanic Verses was first published in 1989, the majority of respondents were aged between 12-15 years. Although none of them were directly involved in the demonstrations, their comments regarding more recent events such as the Oklahoma bombing highlight an affinity with the emotions of individuals who publicly denounced Rushdie's novel:

- *I:** And do you remember the Oklahoma bombing and they thought the Muslims did it and then they found out []
- N:** Oh yeah and now that's like and now that's []
- A:** Yeah and they haven't even given a formal apology or anything. []

J:

|

Yeah

and they didn't even like, they started condemning all the groups and they got all these professional academics to talk about how this could occur and there's no substance in it.

|

|

N:

Yeah and so, yeah and so like now if I'm wearing a hijab I'm an extremist.

At the time of the discussion from which the above extract is taken, almost exactly two years had passed since Oklahoma City suffered a bomb blast destroying a federal building and killing 168 people. The initial media coverage and reaction of senior American politicians attributed the attack to the Middle East and Islamic 'fundamentalists'. Later it emerged that the perpetrator was a white American Christian male²⁷¹. As the preceding extract suggests, respondents' ensuing reactions and discussion of the bombing barely last more than a few seconds. Yet even within this brief exchange some indication of the intensity of anger felt is visible from the fact that Ishtiaq has hardly begun to outline the dominant reactions to the bombing before three other participants become eager to interrupt with their own feelings. The shared infuriation evident in the tone and character of their comments does not, however, reveal a uniform knowledge of or detailed engagement with the incident in question. In fact the respondents exchange little detail about the media coverage surrounding the bombing and seek no clarification of possible variations in their individual interpretations. Unanimity of anger is almost assumed and is quickly confirmed by their respective reactions. The brief and impassioned conclusion to their dialogue about the bombing is indicative of how the current wave of anti-Islamic sentiments has strengthened local and transnational solidarity amongst Muslims.

In the case of the Oklahoma bombing, although American commentators specifically pointed the finger of blame at terrorist organisations in the Middle East, they did so

²⁷¹Timothy Mcveigh was prosecuted and convicted for the bombing. He was executed on June 11th 2001.

by drawing on a vocabulary implicating the practices and beliefs of Muslims the world over²⁷². Within Islam words such as 'fatwah', 'Ayatollah', 'jihad' and so on mean different things in different contexts. For some Muslims they carry important messages about their faith and cannot be collapsed to the notions of terror, violence and intolerance, which is what too often happens within dominant Western discourses. Such appropriations of complex religious concepts have contributed to the racialisation of Islam and Muslims globally, and it is in this context that 'ordinary' Muslims have displayed solidarity with dictatorial regimes and 'terrorist' movements. This point is made by Tariq Modood in his own analysis of British Muslim reactions to the fatwah imposed on Salman Rushdie. He writes, 'What perhaps cannot be denied and is worth noting is that by his intervention the Ayatollah rose in Asian estimation. Not because the majority wished Rushdie killed, let alone wanted to kill him. It was because he was considered to have stood up for Islamic dignity and sensibilities against the West and in contrast to Arab silence.'²⁷³

At this point it is possible to reinforce the weaknesses already highlighted regarding Bhabha and Said's suggestions that Muslim unity forged through an uncritical devotion to Islam invokes racial and ethnic divisions which perpetuate 'border wars'. On one level Modood's observation does to some extent fit Bhabha and Said's suggestions that the uniting of Muslims behind a common struggle reinforces racial boundaries. Said is also right to single out the frustration with legacies of colonialism and imperialism as a key impetus behind the forging of alliances across Muslim populations (see pp46-49). However, the shortcoming in Bhabha and Said's interpretations is that they do not differentiate between different modes of essentialism at work within the 'border wars'. To clarify this point, it is useful to draw on a distinction made by Pnina Werbner. She shows how, 'citizenship rights and multiculturalist agendas are as much dependant on collective objectifications as are racist murders or ethnic cleansing. It is therefore critical to establish clearly the difference between modes of *objectification* and modes of *reification*.'²⁷⁴

²⁷²see for example the documentary *Frontline*, presented by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and broadcast on Channel 4 on 20th September 1995

²⁷³Tariq Modood, 'British Muslims and the Rushdie Affair', in *'Race', Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992), p270

²⁷⁴Pnina Werbner, 'Essentialising Essentialism, Essentialising Silence: Ambivalence and Multiplicity in

For Werbner racist actions amount to a *reification*, or silencing, of internal group differences which become subsumed under a homogenous group identity in order to establish rigid racial and cultural boundaries. By comparison, acts of anti-racism involve the *objectification* of group differences in order to mobilise for action against oppression and subordination. Werbner's distinction between *objectification* and *reification* invites a different interpretation of Muslim solidarity than that proposed by concepts such 'irrational fundamentalism' and 'blind patriotism', as used by Bhabha and Said respectively. For example, commenting on the angry reactions to Rushdie's book, Werbner draws attention to how The Satanic Verses was 'inserted into an already charged political field', the historical roots of which 'can be traced back to British and American imperialism in Iran'²⁷⁵. For many Muslims who were already subject to hostility against their religious affiliation, The Satanic Verses, in 'mocking Islam and its sacred symbols', was seen to contribute and add further fuel to anti-Islamic sentiments. Thus, the solidarity and strength of Muslim emotions against the novel cannot be attributed to religious fanaticism, but are an example of how 'racism is ontologically structured in violent polarising acts' making 'the *experience* of racism ontologically comparable in the perception of victims *across cultural communities* and beyond the historical specificities of particular racisms'²⁷⁶.

Werbner's interpretation of public protests involving Muslims suggests that Muslim solidarity is held together, not so much by an undifferentiated engagement with Islam, but by a shared feeling of injustice arising from the experience of racist Islamophobia. Thus, Bhabha and Said's suggestions that Muslim solidarity as expressed during such episodes as the 'Rushdie affair' are an example of 'difference' being expressed in oppositional terms is not wholly wrong. However, as I illustrate in some detail in the last section of this chapter, beyond the public demonstrations Muslims remain as fragmented and discrepant in their engagements with Islam as they always have (see

the Constructions of Racism and Ethnicity', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), p229. Werbner's ethnographic study of Manchester Muslims (Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims, (Oxford, James Currey, 2002)) narrates in some detail how ethnic mobilisation involves the interweaving of different identities such as 'Muslim', 'Pakistani', and 'South Asian'.

²⁷⁵ibid., p231

pp239-245). In this regard Gilroy's notion of anti-anti-essentialism is able to accommodate the *objectification* of group differences because of its insistence that some notion of a 'shared essence' remains important for opposing ongoing racisms. Gerd Baumann makes a similar observation when he describes the discursive competence of ethnic minority citizens as a 'dual discursive competence', one that involves the contestation of 'culture' as reified by dominant discourses and culture performed as a process of negotiation²⁷⁷. I now show how these two dynamics are representative of Hall's distinction between 'identity politics one' and the 'politics of representation' respectively.

The continuing purchase of 'identity politics one'

As Werbner argues, current Muslim solidarity across regional and national boundaries is characteristic of the early politics of the black British anti-racist movement, which was organised around what Stuart Hall has referred to as, an 'innocent notion of an essential black subject' (see pp69-72). It has generally come to be accepted that without the interventions made by the earlier anti-racist movement, or to use Spivak's term a 'strategic essentialism', the complexity and diversity of diaspora narratives would never have entered the arena of mainstream cultural politics in Britain. However, if as I am suggesting here a similar 'strategic essentialism' currently unites British Muslims with Muslims in the Middle East and their respective religious and political leaders, then a fundamental weakness can be identified in the way in which some proponents of hybridity have understood the 'end of the essential black subject'.

Hall himself suggests that we are no longer in that moment where identities grounded in essentialism 'which naturalize and dehistoricize difference' are able to provide a progressive politics²⁷⁸. However, to interpret the 'strategic essentialism' of earlier anti-racist struggles as a necessary moment which strengthened the political muscle of minority voices, and then reject all subsequent essentialisms as redundant, is to overestimate the success of the 'innocent notion of the essential black subject'. For

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p237

²⁷⁷ 'Dominant and Demotic Discourses of Culture: Their Relevance to Multi-Ethnic Alliances', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp209-225

²⁷⁸ 'What is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture', in *Black Popular Culture*, edited by G. Dent, (Seattle, Bay Press, 1992), p29

example, Modood has documented how the anti-racism of the 1980s focused on colour 'to unite the victims of racism'. As such it 'excluded Asians and other victims of racism who did not see their primary identity and incorporation into British society in terms of colour'²⁷⁹. Modood suggests that as regards fighting racism many Asians placed less emphasis on colour than they did on other aspects of their identity which they felt were more under threat such as religion, language, national origins etc. Thus, the political space fought for by the 'essential black subject' was not inclusive of the variety of experiences of racism.

At this point it is necessary to emphasise the need to understand, and respond to accordingly, the complex and differing motives embedded within current Muslim solidarity. In this respect, whilst it is important to recognise and support the anti-racist objectives of Muslim solidarity forged to oppose Islamophobia, it is also necessary to confront particular conceptions of Muslim unity promoted by Islamic 'fundamentalists' which seek to establish Islam as a superior 'world order'. This is a challenge that can usefully be linked to Hall's conception of the 'politics of representation'. For Hall, internal contradictions and differences within migrant identities cannot be exposed and overcome through 'identity politics one', also referred to as the 'relations of representation', but require an engagement with the 'politics of representation', which emphasises the diversity of voices and subjectivities contained within specific categories such as Asian or Muslim. The final section of this chapter examines the narratives of the Muslim respondents in order to get an insight into the diverse negotiations of Islam and *being* Muslim that are presently taking place, as well as assessing their capacity to espouse racially transgressive identities. I want to end this section by, firstly, establishing that amongst Muslims a 'politics of representation' already exists but is suppressed by dominant discourses. And secondly, identifying the significance of the dynamics of a 'politics of representation' in defeating the racially divisive and pernicious side of Islamic 'fundamentalism'.

The suppression of diverse Muslim subjectivities by dominant discourses

²⁷⁹ 'Difference', Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), p159

There are many differences in the way Muslims interpret and practise Islam. Their absence from public view is more to do with a world media system that 'has an institutionalised tendency to produce out-of-scale transnational images'²⁸⁰. Many Muslims feel muted by this scenario²⁸¹, as relayed by Noshin:

***N:** What I find extremely disturbing is the way you know the media they don't wanna listen to [...] the people who aren't so outrageous, and who aren't so militant who don't have like extreme views, like you know violent views. So they get meted out and the Muslim people who are represented are you know extreme like terrorists stroke extremists.

For Noshin, that Muslim identities are situated in oppositional terms is a situation that could change if other Muslim views and subjectivities, other than those represented by extremists, were given more exposure. In one sense Noshin's observation highlights the value of Hall's emphasis on disrupting the border wars via a 'politics of representation'. However, it also suggests that the 'politics of representation' can only be effective if it is given more weight within dominant modes of representation. This is a very different challenge than that posed by Hall, and needs to be emphasised as such.

Hall identifies the 'politics of representation' as a challenge for anti-racist movements, black artists and cultural workers, if they are to develop more complex conceptions of the 'black' subject. Noshin's comment is specific to Muslims, but it is asserted in the same context as Hall: that of exposing the heterogeneity and diverse subjectivities that compose specific categories such as Muslim. Her frustration with the media's preoccupation with one particular Muslim position alerts us to how more complex conceptions of the Muslim subject remain suppressed because of the failure

²⁸⁰Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism. (London, Vintage, 1993), p375

²⁸¹Whilst many Muslims feel their views and sensibilities are excluded from mainstream Western media, as Sameera Ahmed's doctoral research (titled 'Young British Muslims: Social Space and Active Identity', Leicester University, 2002) highlights, in recent years the growth in 'Muslim media' in Britain has created a new cultural space for Muslims to explore their conviction to Islam as it is negotiated through interaction with Asian, British and Islamic cultural norms. See also Gary Bunt, Virtually Islamic. (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2000) and Peter Mandaville, Transnational Muslim Politics (London, Routledge, 2001)

of dominant discourses to recognise and represent the diversity of Muslim voices - in effect to centralise the 'politics of representation' as their modus operandi for engaging Muslim identities. This emphasis on the need for dominant discourses to develop more complex approaches to representing Muslims posits a whole new set of theoretical challenges which might be described as *the redistribution of responsibility for the 'politics of representation'*. In sum, the 'politics of representation' needs to be engaged by both Muslims and non Muslims, 'migrants' as well as indigenous Western populations, and so on. This underscores the significance of the role of indigenous Western populations in overcoming unequal relations of power and subordination. Unpacking the theoretical intricacies concerning how indigenous Westerners might engage a 'politics of representation' is not a challenge I am able to address in any detail within the confines of this thesis. However, I provide some initial thoughts in the conclusion, within the context of what I call the 'giraffe's perspective' (see pp309-311).

To highlight the importance of the dynamics of a 'politics of representation', that is of engaging subjects as much for their differences as their similarities, for weakening the neo-conservative politics of Islamic 'fundamentalism', I return to the contributions of Jameel and Sulayman and contrast their participation in the empirical research with that of two other members of Al-Muhajiroun, i.e. Ayesha and Imran.

The value of a 'politics of representation' for challenging a neo-conservative politics

Jameel and Sulayman's participation in the video, along with that of Imran, was made possible by Ayesha, who knew them as fellow members of Al- Muhajiroun. I have noted above that Al-Muhajiroun have received a significant amount of media attention in Britain²⁸² which has presented them as 'fundamentalist', and that the group itself aspires to establishing Islam as the 'world order'. The group is also reported to have associations with 'terrorist' organisations such as Hamas and alQaeda. Whether or not there is any truth in these claims, members of Al-Muhajiroun

²⁸²see for example, *Tottenham Ayatollah*, broadcast on Channel 4 on 8th April 1997

have been unapologetic about adopting an openly 'confrontational' style of public debate in order to spread and publicise their cause.

Affiliation to Al-Muhajiroun may go some way towards explaining the demeanour adopted by Jameel and Sulayman, which I described earlier (see pp230-234). That is, if a confrontational style of public debate is encouraged by Al-Muhajiroun, then as members of Al-Muhajiroun it is little surprise that Jameel and Sulayman arrive at and convey the views they do in the manner they do. In identifying this connection it is necessary to remember that Imran and Ayesha are also members of Al-Muhajiroun, but the character and content of their contributions are much less impersonal and confrontational. This is not to say that everything that Ayesha and Imran convey is contrary to the views expressed by Jameel and Sulayman. What interests me here is not whether one individual is more or less outwardly 'fundamentalist' than another. Rather, I want to identify the underlying dynamics behind their differing styles of contribution, as a way of exposing how the kind of neo-conservatism integral to Sulayman and Jameel's comments begins to lose its basis as soon as Muslim identities are engaged in more personalised and non-racialised contexts.

For example, prior to the filming of the video I had established a certain degree of informal relations with Ayesha. This was made possible because of her involvement in the group discussion which provided several opportunities to 'break the ice'. In her contributions to both the discussion and video, Ayesha is unguarded in sharing and relating her personal and changing relationship with Islam - aspects of this are discussed in more detail in the next section. Here I simply wish to note that it is in these moments of personal reflection that she offers opinions that run contrary to a neo-conservative position. For example, she is quite frank about the unacceptable treatment of women in some Muslim countries, a situation which she experienced first hand at the age of 12:

***A:** When we moved to Saudi and seeing the way like women were treated and stuff and just seeing the way things were there I just really got turned off. And it was just like a question of well if there is a God and there is Islam then you know I don't wanna have anything to do with it.

Although now committed to a lifestyle based on the teachings of Islam, Ayesha has not suddenly lost her enthusiasm for fair and equal treatment of women. Indeed, as the following extract suggests, she remains adamant about challenging stereotypes of Muslim women:

+A: I recall once my personal tutor was just like, 'It's so refreshing because not only are you a woman but you're a Muslim woman, and even other women have these like really strong ideas about what you're gonna be. But you're the only one in the whole lecture who decides to speak, or question, or even debate with the lecturer, or even in seminars and stuff.' So, you know, we're beginning to break the mould!

Ayesha's informed sensibility and determined resistance towards the treatment of women in some Muslim societies stands in contrast to Sulayman's casual defence of the Taliban's policies on women's education in Afghanistan (see p231). It is not possible for me to reflect on whether within the circles of Al-Muhajiroun Ayesha and Sulayman would have the opportunity to exchange perspectives on the 'rights' of Muslim women and the character and outcome that such an exchange might take. However, what can be deduced is that they possess very different perspectives and depths of personal experience on the issue. It is perhaps worth recalling that Sulayman's defence of the Taliban is asserted within the context of a 'racist' media and not from the perspective of Muslim women's experiences under Taliban rule. Thus, the question must be posed, 'Would Sulayman be able, or willing, to defend the Taliban's treatment of women in a more personalised context, or when confronted with a narrative such as that presented by Ayesha, a fellow Al-Muhajiroun member?'

One possible reason for Jameel and Sulayman's formal and 'parrot fashion' video presentations is that they are able to maintain their relationship with me and the research exercise as an entirely formal and impersonal encounter. I have already noted that some informality had been established with Ayesha prior to the group discussion and video. By comparison, there was no opportunity for personal interaction with Jameel and Sulayman before the day of filming. The reason for this was that their

involvement was managed by Ayesha, and, although the option had been left open, she had not felt it necessary to involve me in that process. The absence of such contact is likely to have increased the sense of distance and formality felt by Jameel and Sulayman with respect to their participation in the research. The significance of this dynamic needs further comment, in as much as I had had no direct contact with Imran either.

The personal elements in Imran's contribution arise from the contrasts he describes between his own engagement with Islam and that of his parents. This was an obvious point of discussion for Imran, due to being born to Muslim parents yet only really taking a serious interest in his 'Islamic identity' in the couple of years preceding the video. Such a long term and familial association with Islam was not shared by Jameel and Sulayman, due to their relatively recent conversions to Islam. Of course, they may have spoken of the reactions of their families towards their decision to convert but they chose not to. However, if we take other dynamics into account (e.g. lack of informal contact with me; their preference for speaking directly to the camera), then it is not so difficult to picture how they might collectively contribute to define Jameel and Sulayman's involvement in the making of the video as a highly formal and depersonalised encounter.

In the end the dynamics I have highlighted could be considered more speculation than fact. But my intention is not to offer conclusive evidence: rather, it has been to locate the underlying bases for the wholesale or neo-conservative defence of Islamic regimes which groups like Al-Muhajiroun are often portrayed as undertaking. On the basis of my discussion of the contributions of four of its members above, it is possible to suggest that what holds 'fundamentalist' groups like Al-Muhajiroun together is not merely a 'blind' or 'irrational' following, but an environment in which they are able to engage and assert their position in highly formal, antagonistic and racialised terms. For instance, if an Islamophobic media did not exist it is unlikely that Sulayman would be able to maintain his defence of the Taliban. Even if he was shown to be unwavering in his perception of the Taliban, we know from Ayesha's comments that such a neo-conservative position, which is dismissive of the subordination of women, is not shared by the entire membership of Al-Muhajiroun. In fact, Ayesha's comments

suggest that many of the inhuman practices that are associated with brutal Islamic regimes perhaps face their biggest opposition from Muslims, including from within groups like Al-Muhajiroun. It would appear that this internal diversity, the personal inflections of Islam - in sum a 'politics of representation' in which lie narratives committed to individual freedom from oppression and subordination - have become suppressed within 'fundamentalist' inclined groups, or are taking second place to the fight against Islamophobia. This appears to be Ayesha's position. For other individuals the internally critical debates of Islam remain a priority, but are taking place away from the Western gaze simply because 'the West' is not interested.

In many ways my discussion has come full circle. I started off by emphasising the need to differentiate between a *wholesale* defence of Islam and a defence against the prejudices and stereotypes through which Islam is often represented and debated. Whilst Werbner's conceptualisation of *objectification* and *reification* has helped to maintain a theoretical distinction between the two, the boundary has been somewhat blurred by my suggestion that both types of 'defence' share a common source - racism. Thus, the cycle of conflict between Islam and the West endures because of the racialised frameworks of interaction that dominate relations between Muslims and their non Muslim Western counterparts. Pourzand makes an important connection in this respect when she describes how opposition to women's education in Afghanistan is less to do with enforcing the teachings of Islam and more to do with its strong association as being 'foreign inspired' - first as part of a Western inspired drive for modernisation in the 1920s under the rule of Amanullah Khan, and then as part of the Soviet inspired socialism in the 1980s²⁸³. Of course these observations do not justify the kind of rhetoric that ignores or condones Muslim bodies who seek to oppress and subordinate their populations. At the same time, as I have just argued, essential to weakening this neo-conservative Muslim politics is the need to replace the highly racialised contexts in which Muslim identities are currently represented and contested with the dynamics of a 'politics of representation' which prioritises the diverse and changing conceptions of *being* Muslim. It is to the 'politics of representation', the

²⁸³Niloufar Pourzand, 'Female Education and Citizenship in Afghanistan: a Turbulent Relationship', in Women, Citizenship and Difference, (London, Zed Books, 1999), pp87-99

personal negotiations and contestations of Islam, that I now turn in the final section of this chapter.

Culturally Fragmented Encounters and Negotiations of Islam

In the first section of this chapter, I established that in Britain racist stereotypes of Muslims have become intertwined with stereotypes of Asians. As such, representations which interpret Muslim lifestyles as backward are often confused with reductive conceptions of 'Asian' culture. Arranged marriages, subordination of women, and an uncritical loyalty to elders and traditional values are the themes referred to most often to establish the 'anti-modern' character of Muslim societies and Muslim homes. Bobby Sayyid makes a similar observation when he asserts that dominant Western discourses have tended to understand Muslims as a 'moribund' presence. Muslims are perceived as ghosts of the past who 'haunt' the present. Embedded in this proposition, Sayyid adds, is the idea that the 'modern' is in some sense 'western'. By implication this would posit Islam and Muslims as both anti-modern and anti-western²⁸⁴.

The notion of Muslims as an unchanging mass is difficult to reconcile with conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' and their central emphasis on cultural change through never ending processes of identity negotiation. My concern in this section is to contest perceptions of Islam and Muslims as static and pre-modern. The section focuses specifically on the contributions of respondents of South Asian background. I should note from the offset that all the individuals concerned are of Pakistani parentage, and so the discussion is not representative of all South Asian groupings. On the other hand, this is merely a descriptive acknowledgement and is not asserted to compartmentalise Pakistanis from other South Asian groupings as though they were mutually exclusive. Nor do I wish to suggest that Pakistani parentage confines the individuals concerned to this one ethnic grouping. Indeed, a particular aim of the section is to unpack how, in their respective negotiations of Islam, the respondents interact and position themselves to notions of 'Pakistani', 'South Asian', 'British', 'modern' and so on. I begin the section by establishing the dynamics of 'critical

²⁸⁴ **A Fundamental Fear**, (London, Zed Books, 1997)

interaction', as opposed to 'blind submission', as the overriding feature characterising the process of identity negotiation presented by the respondents.

From 'blind' faith to critical dialogues

The narratives of the six respondents being discussed in this section reveal that their respective interactions with Islam during childhood were experiences they had abhorred. For many of them a formal introduction to Islam began about the age of five and consisted of attending classes at mosque where they learnt to read the Quran in Arabic and where they also acquired knowledge about the various duties Muslims are expected to fulfil (such as fasting, praying five times a day, giving alms and so on). From their comments it can be deduced that the respondents' early introductions to Islam generally constituted 'parrot fashion' learning and an expectation that they should simply assimilate the meaning of Islam as it was presented to them by their elders and molweesaabs²⁸⁵. Some respondents expressed huge consternation at the manner of their indoctrination to Islam. For example, Javed recounts:

***J:** When I was younger I suppose I had blind faith. I'd go to mosque and if I didn't get it right my sabaq²⁸⁶ like I'd get battered. [...] to be honest I didn't learn because I had so much God fear in me I was more molweesaab fear, and like I'd be sick and like what a person to talk to you know if you want to know about Islam. [...] And some of the things he did to me like he'd hit me across the head, he'd make me sit in front of the heater, and like bruised my back [...]. I was sore as hell like and at that stage if you wanna learn about something that's not the right way to be taught²⁸⁷. [...] And I said to my mum once like, 'How come you send us there like they smack us and do this and do that to us and even you don't do things like that'. And my mum once said that,

²⁸⁵Teachers at the mosque are referred to as 'molwees' or 'molweesaabs'.

²⁸⁶'Sabaq' means the homework given by the molwee. This usually consists of learning to read a passage from the Quran in Arabic which is then read out to the molweesaab. Emphasis is on pronunciation of Arabic.

²⁸⁷It should be highlighted that the kind of mosque and classroom teaching being described by Javed is specific to Muslim organisations that provide evening classes for children primarily for learning to read the Quran in Arabic. They have a very different set up and purpose than the Muslim schools in Britain. The latter tend to be much more professionally organised, have a certified curriculum and do not resort to the teaching methods of the former.

‘Wherever they hit like fire can’t touch you’, or something like that. [...] They say like ‘You get more sawaab and you get more naykee²⁸⁸ for it’.

It is important to point out that not all molweesaabs subject their pupils to the extreme physical punishment described by Javed. At the same time the significance of his account for, firstly, its resonance with the experiences of other second generation Muslims in Britain, and secondly, its contribution to perceptions of the Muslim character as intrinsically ‘barbaric’ cannot be underplayed and need to be addressed. With respect to the first of these concerns, it is not possible to offer firm evidence indicating how pervasive the use of corporal punishment in mosques in Britain is, or the extent to which the situation may have changed. However, many second generation Muslims like myself can bear witness to the fact that making mistakes in your sabaq was often punished with caning or a slap across the cheek. Two main dynamics can be identified to explain why those running the affairs of the mosque might assume such authority over members of their religious community as to subject them to treatment/practices made illegal in statutory run organisations.

Firstly, as Tariq Modood points out, religion has been ‘central to British Asian ethnicity’ although it has by no means eroded or reduced ‘the complexity and range of identities’²⁸⁹. Secondly, the state has not only been happy for migrant populations to organise their own religious and cultural activities but has also been ill prepared to monitor the conduct of those managing or co-ordinating the respective religious institutions²⁹⁰. As such the religious leaders, teachers and spokespeople of some of Britain’s immigrant communities have often assumed a superior status over ‘ordinary’ members of their faith. That mosques have evolved with little direct involvement from statutory bodies has meant that the authority of religious doctrine has taken precedence over state law in guiding their overall structure and daily activities. What

²⁸⁸‘Sawaab’ and ‘naykee’ are both terms used to suggest that in return for certain deeds or actions you will be rewarded positively in ‘janat’ (i.e. Allah’s house) or that your passage to ‘janat’ will be easier.

²⁸⁹‘Difference’, Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism’, in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), p158

²⁹⁰This situation perhaps came most vividly to light in the immediate period after the events of ‘9/11’ when the police were authorised to raid some of Britain’s mosques, the most publicised being Finsbury Park mosque, on the suspicion they were being used to recruit and support terrorists.

has resulted in mutually exclusive relations between mosque and state nurtured by an underlying rationale which maintains the incompatibility of distinct cultures and the idea that it is improper to interfere with other people's way of life²⁹¹. Thus, even though Javed's molweesaab's actions can be shown to contradict state law on the behaviour of teachers towards pupils²⁹², as I illustrate more clearly in a moment, they are given legitimacy through the authority and rule of Islamic law. Ratifying the precise connection between the practice of corporal punishment and Islamic law is crucial to my concerns in this chapter in that the use of violence as a means of governance is a pivotal focus of debate around which the in/compatibility between Islam and Western culture, and Islam and modernity, is contested. In undertaking to clarify the connection between Islam and corporal punishment I also address a third point implicit in Bhabha and Said's criticisms of Muslim lifestyles, one which identifies a devotion to Islam as thwarting the ability to transcend 'barbaric' forms of discipline and generate new modes of governance (see pp57-58).

There is no denying that a number of passages within primary Islamic texts may be interpreted as promoting forms of corporal punishment which by modern 'Western' standards are deemed to be uncivilised and in breach of human rights. For example, a section of one passage in the Quran reads, 'As for the man or woman who is guilty of theft, cut off their hands to punish them for their crimes'²⁹³. This extract can be seen to uphold dominant media representations depicting Islam as a demonic belief system whose followers are both prone to, and governed by, savage and despotic behaviour²⁹⁴. Admittedly, some media coverage might be disputed for its capacity to act as a reliable representation of individuals unrestrained, or irrational, in their engagement of acts of violence and human cruelty. The public demonstrations against The Satanic Verses, as discussed in chapter 7, would be one such example (see pp280-281). But other examples, including Javed's experience of being made to sit in

²⁹¹In the aftermath of '9/11' the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has attempted to introduce procedures, such as 'citizenship tests', to increase the involvement and influence of the state on the activities of migrant communities. The respective measures have amounted to a reversion to assimilationist policies demanding that 'immigrant' communities adopt 'British' values.

²⁹²corporal punishment was banned from state schools in 1986 and from independent schools in 1998.

²⁹³N.J. Dawood, The Koran, (London, Penguin, 1997), p83

²⁹⁴see Edward Said, Covering Islam, (London, Vintage, 1981)

front of the heater for getting his sabaq wrong, carry an undeniable inhumane quality in as much as they constitute acts of torture in the context of everyday circumstances. And Javed's dissension towards the punishment he endures at mosque is unanimously shared by the other respondents. That the same respondents are now choosing to negotiate a Muslim lifestyle makes their narratives a relevant focus for assessing the connection between Islamic law and physical punishment. More to the point, what I want to ascertain is whether their renewed investment in Islam means that the respondents have become more accepting of corporal forms of discipline.

The respondents' condemnations of imposing religious belief through physical force weren't simply directed at its use in mosques, but also in the context of the public policing of populations in Islamic countries. Noshin and Ayesha, who are sisters and who had spent a considerable amount of their childhood in Saudi Arabia, expressed their abhorrence at the manner in which the general public, and in particular women, were treated by the police:

***A:** When we moved to Saudi and seeing the way like women were treated and stuff and just seeing the way things were there I just really got turned off.
[...]

N: It's like there's a religious police force and they go around with long sticks and if your face isn't covered or you know if there's a little bit of your hair showing they'll whack you one. It's just like you know you don't do that.

This disdain towards the imposition of religion through physical force has not been compromised or weakened as the respondents' attitudes towards Islam have switched from disdain to reverence. For example, when Mustafa, who has converted to the religion more recently, learns of the personal experiences of the other respondents he expresses concern at sending his daughter to mosque:

***M:** Is that how they treat, I mean I've got a daughter and insallah she'll become a Muslim and I'll teach her Islam but do you think that if you grow up in Islam that's how you're taught and let's say 'If you don't do this then bad things will happen to you' and 'You do this God will reward you'?

The other respondents are quick to reassure Mustafa that such an approach is not in fact endorsed by Islam. Ayesha and Noshin for instance offer the following comments:

***A:** I think like with children, ultimately, you have to be patient. You know you can't smack them into it.

[...]

N: And one thing that I like about Islam is that you're supposed to give a child as much respect as we're supposed to give a grown up.

[...]

N: [in direct response to Javed's experience of being taught at mosque] And there's that hadith that says 'don't hit the child on the head'.

Thus, although the respondents in recent years have preferred to negotiate their identities in accordance with the teachings of Islam, they have done so without compromising the enmity felt during childhood towards specific practices presented to them as Islamic. As Noshin's comment suggests, their respective appropriations of Islam have demanded a re-reading of key Islamic texts. This trend challenges Bhabha and Said's representations of Muslims who predicate their everyday lives on the teachings of Islam as somehow bound to pre-modern, inhumane modes of discipline and punishment. Furthermore, the respondents' (re)interpretations of the position of Islam on the use of corporal punishment refutes a fourth assumption in Bhabha and Said's commentaries of Muslim identities, i.e. that, as a scripted mode of thought, Islam is foreclosed to cultural change (see pp54-56). In fact, the culturally transgressive quality that Bhabha associates with The Satanic Verses, what he calls the 'act of translation'²⁹⁵, and which he perceives to be absent from the cultural outlook of Muslims (see p45), can be identified as precisely the dynamic through which the respondents renegotiate Islam's position on corporal punishment.

The 'act of cultural translation' in re-reading primary Islamic texts

As outlined in chapter 1, for Bhabha the 'act of cultural translation' produces 'new' modes of being and seeing and is a process ill-defined by binary opposites such as 'past' and 'present', or, 'archaic' and 'modern'. This is also a central theme running across the work of hybridity theorists. Like Bhabha, the 'newness' with which the hybridity theorists discussed in chapter 2 are concerned is seen to 'emerge from the constant state of contestation and flux'. The Satanic Verses is but one example referred to by Bhabha to describe 'how newness enters world', where the re-reading of the Quran through the medium of the novel unveils other enunciatory positions. A similar 'act of cultural translation' might be located within the narratives of the respondents.

With respect to the use of corporal punishment, we can identify a vivid shift from Javed's mother's stance of 'wherever the molweesaab hits you fire can't touch you', to Noshin's reference to the hadith to emphasise that in Islam 'it is wrong to hit the child on the head'. In effect, by returning to original Islamic scriptures and re-reading specific passages to challenge the particular appropriations of Islam which in childhood made them averse to Muslim lifestyles, the respondents have exposed the 'textual superfluity of the folds and wrinkles'²⁹⁶ present in key Islamic texts, and the potential for Islam itself to shift with the times. A more profound insight into this 'textual superfluity' can be provided here by returning to my earlier quote from the Quran recommending that the crime of theft be punished by the dismembering of hands. The full paragraph reads, 'As for the man or woman who is guilty of theft, cut off their hands to punish them for their crimes. That is the punishment enjoined by God. God is mighty and wise. But whoever repents after committing evil, and mends his ways shall be pardoned by God. God is forgiving and merciful.'²⁹⁷ The opportunity for 'repenting' one's crimes that is built into this passage might also be translated as an opportunity for those enforcing the law to avoid the need for physical punishment. In other words, the possibilities for systems of repenting and pardoning

²⁹⁵'How Newness Enters the World', in The Location of Culture. (London, Routledge, 1994), pp212-235

²⁹⁶ibid., p227

²⁹⁷N.J. Dawood, The Koran, (London, Penguin, 1997), p83

become bounded only by human vision and will and the weight accorded to being 'forgiving and merciful' as opposed to 'mighty and wise'.

The peculiarity of the transition from 'blind' faith to critical appropriations of Islam described by the respondents necessarily disrupts the static and pre-modern status often accorded to Islam and Muslims. But their narratives achieve much more than promote Muslim identities as inconstant, open to contestation and review. They also highlight how the relationship between Islamic law and British law need not be framed in mutually exclusive terms. The respondents' (re)interpretation of Islamic texts as discouraging the use of corporal punishment is compatible with both British law and Islamic law and so can be seen to represent a bridging of the 'law of the state' and the 'law of the mosque'. This is an important observation with respect to ongoing debates about protecting the rights of minority groups and campaigns for a pluralist legal system that allows minority groups communal autonomy to govern themselves. Such an approach, as Samia Bano suggests, runs the real danger of encouraging 'the creation of separatist politics, ghettoising minority communities outside the mainstream legal system and thus defining them as the 'other''²⁹⁸. In this respect the respondents' renegotiation of Islamic practices in a manner that is compatible with both Islamic and British law presents a more viable alternative. It encourages a mutually informative dialogue between distinct cultures to establish common precedents in legal/judicial processes, thereby avoiding ghettoisation and the arrangement of cultures along superior/inferior continuums.²⁹⁹.

In as much as the respondents are overwhelmingly reliant on Islamic texts for defining their identities, but at the same time are reinterpreting the teachings of Islam, their narratives can be shown to resemble the model of identity formation developed by Gilroy which emphasises that identities should neither be seen as 'a fixed essence'

²⁹⁸ 'Muslim and South Asian Women: Customary Law and Citizenship in Britain', in Women, Citizenship and Difference, edited by N. Yuval-Davis & P. Werbner, (London, Zed Books, 1999), p175

see also Bhikhu Parekh, 'British Citizenship and Cultural Difference', in The Rights of Minority Cultures, edited by W. Kymlicka, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995)

²⁹⁹ The academic and Muslim activist Tariq Ramadan, who has been recognised as a leading Muslim reformer, has devoted much of his work to promoting the practice of *ijtihad* which encourages the reinterpretation of sacred Muslim texts. See his, Western Muslims and the Future of Islam, (Oxford,

nor 'a wholly contingent construction'. There is, however, a notable difference between Gilroy's model and the process of identity formation relayed by the respondents. In Gilroy's model there is an undeniable recognition of the influence of multiple cultural locations in the formation of modern diaspora subjectivities and identities. This plurality sits alongside an implicit theme of connectedness, which Gilroy retains through a reworking of the concepts of unity, authenticity and tradition (see pp97-100). By comparison, the narratives of the Muslim respondents explicitly foreground one particular axis of identification, Islam, whilst the influence of additional axes of identification, though not denied, are seen to be secondary. This aspect of the respondents' narratives might be described as the desire to *authenticate* Islam which I want to outline more clearly before unpacking how cross-cultural identity negotiation within the confines of Islamic doctrine takes shape and its implications for a progressive cultural politics.

Theorising the desire to 'authenticate' Islam

The ethnic background of the individuals under discussion cannot be confined to one grouping but comprises multiple ethnic locations including British, Muslim, Pakistani, South Asian and so on. These categories acquire meaning through the particular ways in which each is experienced and negotiated by the individual. With respect to this many of the respondents openly declared a conscious decision to single out Islam, and more specifically primary Islamic texts, as the medium through which to engage the multiple co-ordinates of their identities.

The specific contexts in which each respondent has become drawn to foregrounding Islam over and above all other axes of identification are many and varied - contexts which will become clear as the rest of this section unfolds. However, the peculiarities are bound by an overall trait of identifying the original source for particular cultural practices, customs and traditions. For example, Imran states:

+Im: It's only until about three or four years ago when I really noticed and understood the difference between Islamic culture and Asian culture. And this distinction is so important, every Muslim must bear this distinction in mind.

Because the fusion of Asian culture and Islamic culture has led to the blackening of the name of Islam. You know there's been so much, so many foreign things which have been attributed to Islam which in actual fact are not part of Islam at all.

The propensity to circumscribe Islam in a manner redeeming it from 'other' cultural influences might be interpreted as a desire to protect the *authenticity* of Islam. This line of interpretation is supported further by the clear sense amongst the respondents of wanting to be recognised as simply 'Muslim':

***A:** I mean [holds up discussion handout referring to the title (see Table 1, chapter 5, p201)] you know Young British Muslims you know should the focus be on the British, or should it be on the Muslim because it's just like for me I'm just a Muslim in Britain. I'm not you know

[

M: Same for me I totally agree.

A: Yeah I mean if I moved to like say Gambia or like Russia or like Pakistan I'm not going to be Pakistani Muslim, or a Gambian Muslim. I should just be a Muslim in Pakistan or a Muslim in Gambia or whatever. And I think

[

N: I just like, I was just about to say you know like when especially if you're like second generation in England or whatever you have a fragmented vision of home anyway right. But for me like when you asked me [referring to Bilkis] 'Are you from London?' I was just 'Err I moved here three years ago', I didn't know what to say. 'Cause if someone asks me 'what I am?' you know I'll say well originally I'm from Pakistan and I do realise what an emotional and cultural investment I have in the place. But for me I'm not really anything. I really just see myself as a Muslim more than say Pakistani.

Taken at face value the respondents' disapproval of being described in hyphenated terms might be interpreted as precluding the kind of free flowing cross-cultural dialogues identified by many hybridity theorists as the 'democratic' strength of a diaspora cultural politics. But considering the empirical data as a whole it would be difficult to arrive at such a conclusion.

There are some very particular features about the way in which the respondents have sought to authenticate their Muslim lifestyles that sets their narratives apart from the idea of authenticity as a recovery and preservation of the 'past'. In that sense, within the respondents' negotiations of Islam, although the play of *authenticity* functions more explicitly than that envisaged in Gilroy's model (see p98) the two are similar in that neither denotes a 'fixed essence'. For instance, in direct response to their expressed desires to be recognised as 'just Muslim', I asked the respondents if being in Britain shaped their experiences of *being* Muslim any differently than if they were living in another country. Noshin and Ayesha replied:

***N:** Yeah I think it is like culture specific. Like for example, like me being the way, or behaving the way and practising the way that I do here would be totally different than in Pakistan. I think like you know the reactions that you get may be just like you know it's usually from like the dominant [culture] that you're living in. So I think that if you were say in Pakistan it'd be different. I think that is culture like culture specific.

A: I think it's really funny because like over here like you tend to look at things in kind of like states of humanist and liberalist you know. And like over here as a practising Muslim I have to watch for things like, oh you should say this or you should say like buy this, or buy that blah blah blah. Whereas out say for instance in Pakistan yeah, they would probably see us as being really liberal even though we may be more Islamic in practise than them. Because of

Different cultures. You see like

|
N: Yeah. Yeah like when we go, my aunt's just like 'You really come home in seven in the night?' And I'm like, 'Yeah'. 'You really go to University?', 'Yeah.' Like they just think I'm like this mod con woman like goes round doing whatever she wants and really independent.

These comments suggest that the possibilities for cultural intermixing have not necessarily been foreclosed by the conscious foregrounding of Islam. And as the reaction of Noshin and Ayesha's aunt would suggest, Muslim identities in Britain have taken shape in quite different ways to those in Pakistan. Her nieces present themselves as more liberal and independent than Muslim women in Pakistan even though the former "may be more Islamic in practice".

In unearthing these dynamics I am not proposing that the respondents are in some sort of denial about the cultural interplay impressed upon the structure and character of their everyday lives. Rather, the respondents present something of a theoretical challenge to current debates about the formation of migrant identities and contemporary experiences of 'cultural hybridity'. On the one hand their narratives defy essentialist conceptions of identity in that they do not represent a homogenous and fixed notion of the 'Muslim' subject. At the same time, the pluralist perspective, with its emphasis on the unbounded or infinite possibilities of cross-cultural fusion, is rendered equally inadequate by the fact that the respondents' engagement of different cultures is constantly tempered by the teachings of Islam³⁰⁰. In Noshin's words, "It's okay to have your own culture as long as it doesn't go against Islam". In making a judgement about whether these dynamics of cultural interplay carry progressive or regressive implications for the (trans)formation of cultures, it is useful to examine how they have manifested themselves in the lived experiences of the respondents. Here I turn my attention to how the respondents' particular negotiations of Islam have

³⁰⁰In his research on 'Southallians' Gerd Baumann also identifies a dual aspect to the character of identity negotiation amongst local South Asians. He differentiates the two aspects as cultural negotiation through 'dominant discourse' where individuals reify identities to specific categories such as Asian, Punjabi or Sikh, and cultural negotiation through 'demotic discourse' where individuals create new cultural meanings and expressions through interaction with multiple cultural locations. See Baumann's, *The Multicultural Riddle*, (London, Routledge, 1999); 'Dominant and Demotic Discourses of Culture: Their Relevance to Multi-Ethnic Alliances', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, edited by P.

impacted on their relations with their immediate family as well as non Muslims. My analysis suggests that, when positioned against the identities of their parents/elders, the process of identity negotiation going on amongst second generation Muslims in Britain can be perceived to be racially transgressive in that it resembles Hall's description of the 'decoupling of ethnicity from nationalism' (see p71).

Inter-generational differences and the 'decoupling of ethnicity from nationalism'

For many respondents, their personal interaction with Islamic texts has provided an empowering position from which to transcend cultural traditions constricting personal relations to racially bounded groups. Perhaps the most vivid example of this is provided by Shagufta with respect to her parents' expectations about marriage. She asserts:

+S: I am quite proud to be a Pakistani I enjoy the food, the clothes, whatever. But I don't let it restrict me. I think culture should be a pleasure thing, shouldn't make life more difficult. [...] And I don't understand why our parents they bring the oppression on themselves. They find the culture oppressive, like in terms of dowry and, you know, why reproduce the traditions that you're finding hard to live with anyway.

[...]

I've found that Islam gives me a lot more freedom than my Pakistani culture ever did. And like if I try and tell my parents something that they're imposing on me is not religious, like Islam actually gives me the right to marry another Muslim whether he's black or white or whatever, they won't like it. [...] I mean I try and assert myself and say, 'No mum I don't have to wear red on my wedding day, it's not Islamic', she just can't understand it.

This process of re-reading Islamic scriptures to resist parental expectations on aspects of personal behaviour resembles the earlier discussion on corporal punishment. In both instances the respondents can be shown to have negotiated a position which is

Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp209-225 and Contesting Culture, (Cambridge,

simultaneously in synch with Islam, and yet directly opposed to another position also legitimated as 'Islamic' by their parents/elders.

In terms of identity politics, these empirical findings highlight very different conceptions of ethnicity embedded in the Muslim identities being negotiated by the respondents, as compared with those asserted by their parents/elders. The latter have appropriated Islam to re-establish national and cultural boundaries that have been disrupted by migration, thus representing what Hall describes as a culturally constructed sense of ethnicity nurtured by regressive ideas of nationalism³⁰¹. The pressure placed on Shagufta to marry another Pakistani is one example of this. Other examples openly condemned by the respondents encroach into some of the most rudimentary aspects of *being* Muslim. For instance, the respondents scorn at how the congregation of many local mosques tends to be dominated by individuals and families who share the same country of origin. Similarly, they object to the deliberate manipulation of calculating the day on which Eid is celebrated³⁰², one of the most important dates in the Muslim calendar:

***M:** You know when Eid is let's say you know.

[

N: Yeah, like five different days.

[

M: I was in Scotland for Eid. And in Scotland they celebrated Eid when they sighted the moon and that decides whether they're gonna do it on the 30th day, you know say if the moon is not sighted on the 29th then we have to do it after the 30th because there are only 30 days in a lunar month. I found I phoned up down South and they'd I was told they'd taken their information from Saudi Arabia. Which I was told was really dodgy because

[

Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁰¹'New Ethnicities', in *Black Film, British Cinema*, edited by K. Mercer, (London, ICA, 1988), pp26-31

³⁰²If the moon is sighted on the 29th day of Ramadan then Eid is celebrated on what would have been the 30th fast. If the moon is not cited on the 29th then an extra day of fasting is required and Eid is celebrated the day after.

- N: [Oh yeah.
- A: [Oh my God yeah, 'cause Saudi Arabia a few days ahead had said that we're going to celebrate on that day anyway.
- M: Yeah
- N: [This was a huge bone of contention in our house this Eid. We were just like 'we're... [[
- A: [Yeah 'cause Nosh and I
- N: ...not, we're not gonna celebrate Eid until someone actually sees the moon. We're not going to go by calculation'. And my parents were just like 'Well the whole family's going to do it and your not going to do it', and blah blah blah and, 'how can you do this', and 'just do it'. And like we were just like 'No', and we're just like [
- A: [It's just like completely missing the point like we could be missing a day of fasting you know.
- N: [And we're just like, 'Well hey if you wanna do it we're not stopping you, we're just saying that we don't wanna do it'.

By adhering to the directions of the Quran and hadith, it has been possible for many young Muslims to dissociate themselves from the nationalist rhetoric and tensions that are played out between different Muslim communities, and which members of their own families might be associated with. Here, ethnicity is, in effect, *decoupled* from its equivalence with nationalism. In that sense the cultural politics of the newly emergent Muslim subjectivities can be deemed to be analogous to the politics of 'new

ethnicities'. However, *decoupling* in the two instances is achieved via distinctly different cultural *routes*.

Hall envisages 'new ethnicities' as emerging from an engagement with the multiple co-ordinates of identity and not 'by marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities'³⁰³. By comparison, it is precisely by pronouncing the authority of Islamic scriptures over all other sources defining human behaviour that the respondents have re-negotiated a Muslim identity which is anti-nationalist and more racially inclusive than that asserted by their parents/elders. It is appropriate here to note Sayyid's observation that it is precisely the transnational, or anti-national, emphasis of current Muslim subjectivities that defines them as both diasporic formations as well as an interruption to the global, specifically Western, hegemonic order which is built on the logic of the nation. From this comparison Sayyid suggests that current Muslim (and diaspora) subjectivities, with their emphasis on transnational identifications, are built on the principle of inclusion, which transcends the logic of the nation which is based on exclusion³⁰⁴.

The transnational identifications emphasised in the respondents' identities suggest that the foregrounding of one axis of identification need not impede the racially transgressive *transformation* of cultures. Having said that, it would be too simplistic to conclude that the narratives of the respondents refute the emphasis placed by Hall, and other hybridity theorists, on the 'play of difference' as a key catalyst to the emergence of a positive conception of ethnicity. Here lies the more intricate theoretical challenge: that of being able to conceive the significance of the 'play of difference' in the context of an unashamed and explicit assertion of just *being* Muslim. This connection can be illustrated more clearly by reflecting on the narratives of Javed and Shagufta.

The 'play of difference' in 'being' explicitly Muslim

³⁰³New Ethnicities', in *Black Film. British Cinema*, edited by K. Mercer, (London, ICA, 1988), p29

³⁰⁴S. Sayyid, 'Beyond Westphalia: Nations and Diasporas - the Case of the Muslim *Umma*', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, edited by B. Hesse, (London, Zed Books, 2000), pp33-50

Once we begin to get to grips with the underlying dynamics that draw someone like Javed to question the use of corporal punishment at mosque, or someone like Shagufta to resist the code for female behaviour prescribed by her parents, it is clear that the 'play of difference' is of immense significance to the constitution of the Muslim identities under discussion. For it is precisely from the position of being simultaneously located in two 'distinctly different cultural assemblages'³⁰⁵, in the form of the school and the mosque, that Javed can compare, ask questions and make judgements about different styles of pedagogic practice. Similarly, being able to have meaningful personal relations with people of non Pakistani background without compromising her status as a Pakistani Muslim becomes an issue that Shagufta needs to resolve the moment she encounters people of 'other' backgrounds and begins to feel like an *outsider* at both home and school:

+S: At school it was like, there was a lot of things which I couldn't do because I was a Muslim which the other children could [...] plus I grew up in quite a racist area. So I mean I always felt different. I didn't fit in exactly with my family, didn't fit in exactly at school and this difference was always justified through Islam.

Interestingly, Shagufta's words represent an almost carbon transposition of Salman Rushdie's argument, as presented by Bhabha, that 'the migrant's survival depends on discovering 'how newness enters the world''³⁰⁶. Shagufta's survival depends on the ability to manoeuvre in the social spaces claimed by both her parents and the racists without condoning their respective cultural outlooks. In effect, Shagufta has to find a 'new' cultural outlook in order to survive. In the course of negotiating a successful resolution to her predicament, culture ceases to "make life more difficult" and becomes a "pleasure thing".

The 'play of difference' then can be identified as the stimulus behind the particular questions that the respondents pose in the course of *renegotiating* their Muslim

³⁰⁵Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, (London, Verso, 1993)

³⁰⁶Homi Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World', in *The Location of Culture*, (London, Routledge, 1994), p227

identities. As such the respondents' expressed desire to be recognised as just Muslim does not mean that they have suddenly stopped being 'British', or 'Pakistani' or 'Asian', and so on. Rather, these multiple co-ordinates inform and disrupt the respondents' whole sense of *being* Muslim and are themselves transformed in the process. For example, in Shagufta's appropriation of Islam marrying a non Pakistani does not constitute an act of betrayal to her Pakistani culture, nor does it dilute her status as a 'Pakistani Muslim'. And this is a *transformation* of the particular conception of 'Pakistani Muslim' conceived by her parents, in which 'Pakistani' and 'Muslim' are locked in a reciprocal relationship. In Shagufta's outlook the two axes of difference begin to function more independently of each other, but not in a mutually exclusive sense. The two still collide and meld, hence informing the character and meaning of one another. At the same time, the reciprocal relationship is unlocked, in as much as *being* a 'Pakistani' and 'Muslim' no longer restricts personal interaction to individuals of 'Pakistani Muslim' background. These intergenerational differences alert us to the complex and contradictory ways in which the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity', and more specifically multiple cultural locations, are experienced and negotiated. This point is re-emphasised at the end of the next subsection (see pp265-266), and developed further in the conclusion of the thesis (see pp305-308).

The specific relationship between ethnicity and difference emerging from the respondents' narratives suggests that the *authentication* of their Muslim identities cannot be accurately described as an act of essentialism, in that they cannot be collapsed into an unchanging, homogenous conception of the 'Muslim' subject. The relationship is perhaps better encapsulated by Brah's conception of a 'politics of location' which I now describe.

The significance of a 'politics of location'

In her examination of diaspora cultural formations Brah introduces the term a 'politics of location', in which the experience of *location* commands as much weight as *dispersion* and *dislocation* in the constitution of diaspora identities and subjectivities (see pp85-86). The incisiveness of Brah's observation for the analysis of young Muslim identities is underscored by Ishtiaq and Noshin:

+I: Before I was like thinking about Islam I was just trying to be like a good person, you know I thought 'oh well if I don't do anything wrong and cause any harm to anyone, and I just do good things that I'll be okay'. But then I think I realised that, you know, 'how do you define good and bad?'. It's like we can change our, you know man tends to change what is good when it suits him better and what is bad when it suits him better, it's just natural. So I think I realised that we need some kind of moral code or something you can follow you know. That's what I think led me to you know look in further in that sense.

+N: Maybe perhaps you can link this to sort of postmodern fragmentation of systems of belief, or you know secularisation and the emphasis on the material rather than the spiritual. And perhaps like you know, in this sort of increase in secularisation we don't have the sort of perceptions, we don't have the perceptual tools to gauge with, you know, there not being one unified truth or what have you. So perhaps like young Muslims feel, or, they turn to Islam, or Islamic fundamentalism, as a sort of anchorage. You know as a sort of like thing to hold on to, a sort of certainty.

The desire to *locate* oneself represented in the search for a moral code, for certainty or anchorage, highlights a significant uneasiness with feelings of fragmentation and chaos. More importantly, this uneasiness has not arisen out of an unwillingness to interact with multiple axes of difference, but from within the process of engaging difference itself and at the specific point where the boundaries between good and bad begin to blur. Here the desire for 'location' can be distinguished as being driven by a wholly different set of dynamics and objectives than those associated with a return to a homogenous 'past'. In sum the return to a homogenous 'past' is a means through which to erect rigid boundaries of 'race', whilst the desire for 'location', as relayed by the respondents, is a means through which to overcome established boundaries of 'race'. This is illustrated more clearly by the ongoing generational conflicts between the respondents and their parents/elders.

The foregrounding of Islam may have provided the respondents with more stability and direction to their lives, but it hasn't lessened the conflicts around personal conduct between them and their parents. Interestingly, where once respondents may have been described as being too Western or betraying their religion/culture, they are now more likely to be accused of being too religious or going over the top:

***J:** It's like my brother like he's like 18 and like he observes Islam and practices as much as he can. But I'm sure there's times when my parents wish they could switch him off I really really do. 'Cause like before they were like sort of would hassle him but then like when he would observe certain issues and they won't feel happy about it I can see it. And like then that's when they think "Oh no right we can't push them", and I've noticed since like he's become more sort of more religiously minded my parents won't like hassle us like so much. [group snigger expectantly]

B: Oh right.

S: I think they want you to be religious but through Pakistani kind of culture.

J: Yeah definitely.

A: Yeah.

N: Yeah.

[...]

N: I was just about to say that a couple of weeks ago we had guests and there was one well we hadn't seen them since for like ten years and she walks in, she comes in sits down and we all sit down and she goes to Ayesha

A: No the first thing she says, the first thing she says to Nosh, 'You look so different! You look so

different!' and then when Nosh and me, Nosh just went [mimics N giggling] [group laughs] and she goes 'Ha to' [Urdu words] like she say's she goes, 'Oh so since when did you put the you know put the hijab on?' and stuff and I went, we said 'Ah well it's been about two years'.

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N: Yeah and then she was like, 'Well it's a bit much isn't it?'

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A: Yeah, 'Its a bit too much isn't it?' [laughs].

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N: And it's like, 'Look your dressed how you want to dress and I'm not making any sort of judgements, I'm not saying anything to you, that's your business. I'm wearing a piece of cloth and it's covering something, it's not showing anything it's just a piece of cloth'. And it's such a big deal I just don't understand what a big deal it is.

That the respondents are now being challenged by their own families not to be too religious confirms that their engagements of Islam have not been driven by a desire to restore solidarity within the family or community. These generational disputes are crucially significant in their revelations of the multi-faceted outcomes of the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'. On the basis of the preceding discussion, it is possible to suggest that the identities of both the respondents and their parents/elders involve interaction with and negotiation of more than one cultural location. However, the cross-cultural identities negotiated by their parents result in the interdependency of axes of difference, such as Pakistani and Muslim, in a manner that creates more and more racially exclusive identities. By comparison, as my analysis of Shagufta's narrative shows, whilst the identities of the respondents are also informed by more than one axis of difference they have managed to overwhelm the racially exclusive notion of 'Pakistani Muslim' invoked by their parents by breaking the reciprocal interdependency of 'Pakistani' and 'Muslim'. I return to these observations in the conclusion of the thesis, when I try to identify and differentiate between the dynamics through which the negotiation of multiple cultural influences results in the assertion of more exclusive identities and, the dynamics through which the negotiation of

multiple cultural influences contests and overwhelms rigid boundaries of 'race' and culture (see pp305-308).

I should be careful not to paint an impression of Muslim families as two constantly warring factions of younger and older generations. Their differences aside, many of the respondents maintain strong and valued relations with their parents and elders. Also the actual points of conflict or disagreement between the generations vary considerably in each case. For example, Shagufta's parents perceive her educational aspirations as incompatible with *being* Muslim, whereas Noshin and Ayesha are positively encouraged by their parents to pursue further education. I note these points to emphasise that whilst overall generational trends can be identified they cannot be collapsed into one unified experience.

I want to end this section by narrowing my concern with describing constantly evolving and culturally complex Muslim identities, to focus on contesting the capacity of Islam to provide a framework for identity negotiation through which individuals may effect progressive cultural change. I undertake this examination with specific reference to the position of Muslim women. This is an appropriate context for investigating the progressive qualities of Islam because the position of women in Muslim societies and Muslim households is a principal theme in dominant Western discourses, as well as in Bhabha and Said's commentaries, for adjudging the inherently inferior and anti-modern status of Islam. My analysis interrogates the contributions of three female respondents, Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta, and presents their relationship with the veil/hijab as a 'changing same' as theorised by Gilroy.

The veil as a 'changing same'

Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta convey a shifting and culturally relative attitude towards Islam and its capacity to offer a framework for establishing gender equality. In the course of recognising the potential of Islam as a means for empowering their own lives, they confront both Western stereotypes as well as the oppressive reality of women's existence in some Muslim societies. All three respondents present their earliest experiences as an ongoing battle to resist particular codes for female behaviour prescribed by Islam. For example, Noshin and Ayesha recount:

***N:** I remember when we actually went to Jeddah we were so adamant. We were just like, 'We hate it here, we're not going to like it, we can't like it'.

A: [in a comically pitched voice] 'There's no way that you're going to make us wear hijab!'

Of all the traits borne by Muslim women, the one that has undoubtedly received the most attention and scrutiny is veiling. In some Muslim societies it remains the primary mode through which gender divisions are affirmed and men assert their control and ownership of women. This is the context that fuels Noshin and Ayesha's objections to being expected to wear the hijab. The ferocity of women's powerlessness under Islamic dictate to exercise control over their own bodies is felt by Noshin on her first day at school in Jeddah:

***N:** What happened was the first day I actually went there I was in my tight jeans and hairspray in my hair and everything [group laugh]. [...] And you can't leave the campus unless your, someone comes to the gate tells your name to the watchman he announces it over the mic and then you leave through this really tiny like passage thing. And so what happened was my driver came and my name was announced and as I'm leaving I get this whack [describes with hand] on the back. And I turned round and this woman goes 'Are you Muslim?', and I go 'Yes I am'. She goes 'Why isn't your hair covered where's your abayah?' you know the black thing you wear, and I'm just like, I go 'My God', I go 'Look I'm really sorry I didn't know it was part of the school regulations. There's no need for you to hit me'. You know and I was like 'From tomorrow I'll wear one'.

These experiences uphold the 'submissive' character associated with women who wear the veil. In Noshin's case, voluntary submission to the veil is not forthcoming and so coercive submission supervenes.

Individuals like Shagufta, who have spent all of their lives in Britain, do not share Noshin and Ayesha's experience of having to conform to veiling under the sanctioned authority of the state. The pressure on Shagufta to cover her hair comes from her parents. And it constitutes what might be described as a diluted version of veiling in that she is not expected to "wear the proper thing":

***S:** When I was younger when people used to come round my mum used to give me like a duppatta just a thin piece of cloth [A laughs] and which you could see through and she'd be like 'Wear this when people come round'. But if I was to actually put on a proper thing she would have freaked out, she'd be like 'What you doing?' [M laughs]. You see you're supposed to be Pakistani you know like=

J: =Yeah and even though wearing the proper thing would be more right than just wearing something that's

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S: Yeah, even if I was to do it now she'd be like 'What you doing?' [group laughs] She would be like that you know. You know 'Why can't you be normal?'

Shagufta's experience is important for understanding the complex relationship between the veil and its oppressive impact on women's lives. Her narrative highlights that the garment itself doesn't function to constrict Muslim femininity. In Shagufta's case the duppatta provided by her mother ceases to fulfil the purpose of veiling defined by Islam - i.e. to keep the hair, curves and flesh of the body, except face and hands, covered when in the presence of men outside of the immediate family. Yet, the diluted version of veiling imposed on Shagufta does not lessen any of the female predicaments that are commonly perceived to be the direct outcome of the practice of veiling. She remains under considerable pressure from her parents to confine her social activities to the family environment; to refrain from pursuing education beyond secondary school; to marry someone from within the family circle; and so on. As such, Shagufta's experiences emphasise the need to disassociate the veil as the 'actual' agency of oppression. Moreover, disconnecting the veil from its firm

association as a symbol of women's subordinate status is crucial to making sense of how the veil might be seized and reappropriated for the purposes of female empowerment. This is precisely the position achieved by the respondents.

Throughout their teenage years the women had vehemently objected to veiling, using their personal experiences to expose its fallacy as a practice to protect female sexuality and gender equality. At the time of the interview, and now in their early twenties, Noshin and Ayesha, who had reluctantly covered their hair in Jeddah, have in Britain sought to increase their sense of empowerment and control over their own femininity by incorporating the hijab into their dress code. The decision 'to cover' by the sisters was taken independently of each other and at different times of their lives. Shagufta, who was not observing the practice of veiling at the time of the interview, has in subsequent years also adopted the hijab³⁰⁷.

As previous extracts have shown, the women's chosen style of veiling is berated by members of their immediate families. It is also reviled by British society and Western feminism. The women are therefore under no social obligation or pressure to wear the hijab and as such it is difficult to refute their claims that the decision 'to cover' is wholly one of personal choice and free will. The only possible grounds, then, for conceiving the women as 'oppressed creatures' is if in wearing the hijab they have individually opted to suppress or compromise their independence and freedom of movement. That conclusion too is thwarted by the women's stated aspirations and outward demeanour. As covered women, Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta bear no resemblance to any of the negative connotations commonly associated with the 'veiled woman'. Ignorance and docility neither feature in the manner in which they interact nor in the personal ambitions and goals that they have set for themselves. Their short video biographies are evidence of young, educated, career seeking women who exude a confidence and desire to debate and express their opinions openly. And this is typical of the majority of women who have taken the hijab in Britain.

³⁰⁷I stumbled across this information upon reading a Guardian article on Muslim women in which Shagufta had participated as an interviewee and was pictured wearing the hijab. see 'Can Islam Liberate Women?' by Madeleine Bunting, in *The Guardian Weekend* magazine, pp16-20, December 8th 2001

As individuals who remain opposed to the practice of veiling being forced on women, Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta's active renegotiations of the veil and its central positioning within more liberated notions of Muslim femininity challenge dominant Western conceptions which perceive the veil as a symbol of female oppression. The women's narratives suggest that it is more appropriate to situate and examine the practice of veiling in a similar context to what Gilroy describes as 'a changing same'.

Using the example of how different versions of the same song can be created by dubbing, scratching and mixing of the twelve inch single, Gilroy argues that the emphasis of 'a changing same' is to highlight an implicit connection of unity in that the cultural styles or meanings created by each version are significantly different even though their common connection is easily identifiable by the use of the same song on a twelve inch single (see p98). In a similar way, the practice of veiling might signal a shared identity amongst Muslim women living in different parts of the world but in fact the meaning and impact of the veil on their lives may be vastly different. In the case of Shagufta, Ayesha and Noshin, their relationship to the veil has constituted a journey in which the role of the veil as an affirmation of patriarchal relations has been reinscribed as a form of female empowerment. This shifting significance and meaning of the veil, or to use Noshin's phrase 'the polyvalency of the veil', can be attributed to changing temporal and spatial dynamics which I now describe.

Changing temporal and spatial dynamics and the 'polyvalency of the veil'

For many Muslim women in Britain the veil has become an autonomous expression of female identity through which to explore and negotiate their position in society, in particular in relation to notions of sexuality and gender relations. For Shagufta, Ayesha and Noshin, and other Muslim women, wearing the hijab is an important part of that negotiated position and the one that makes them feel the most liberated and at ease in the environment in which they live. At the same time, the women do not profess to have overcome the oppressive connotations of the veil for all women in all times and all places. In that respect, their narratives do not constitute a wholesale

endorsement of the veil, but expose what Noshin describes as 'the polyvalency of the veil'³⁰⁸.

That in this historical moment the veil holds such contradictory and changing significance on Muslim women's lives underlines Gilroy and Rattansi's respective observations that modern identities disrupt linear conceptions of time and space (see pp99-100 and pp103-105). It is only by applying a non-linear conception of time/space dynamics that we can begin to understand why the veil may oppress women in one part of the world whilst providing a sense of independence and freedom for women in another part of the world. For example, in some Muslim societies the veil remains an expression of male domination. The earlier quotations of Noshin and Ayesha's recollections of living in Jeddah reveal how the veil can function as a means through which women's movement and participation in society is monitored and controlled. But in Britain the veil is inserted into a distinctly different cultural context. It exists independently of the state; alongside dominant expressions of femininity it is in a minority; and it resides in a social situation where public, and for that matter private, contact between the sexes is not restricted to immediate family members. It is in this context that for many Muslim women the veil's intended purpose, to adorn women with a sense of privacy, respectability and independence from male jurisdiction, begins to come to fruition. As such, the respondents' adoption of the veil in Britain can be read as a response to their personal experiences of the limitations of Western conceptions of femininity as a position from which to establish freedom from male control. On this point it is useful to note the work of Reina Lewis, whose examination of the fiction writing of Ottoman women reveals that, '[t]he West was central to [Ottoman] women's consideration of female emancipation too, although it figured as a disappointment just as often as it did as a positive model'³⁰⁹.

At this stage it is possible to evaluate the final point of criticism highlighted by my examination of Bhabha and Said's commentaries, a point which relates specifically to Bhabha's suggestion that Islam cannot provide a framework for furthering women's

³⁰⁸Noshin Ahmad, 'Hijabs in Our Midst', in *Young Britain*, edited by J. Rutherford, (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), p77

³⁰⁹'Writing the Racialised Self? Ottoman Women Writers and Western Feminism', in *New Ethnicities, Old Racisms*, edited by P. Cohen, (London, Zed Books, 1999), pp63-81

rights (see pp59-60). Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta's changing relations with the veil indicate that the principles of Islam cannot be seen to have one outcome for all women in all times and all places. In that sense the weakness in Bhabha's position is that it imposes a linear framework of time and space which consigns Islam and specific practices such as veiling to a pre-modern past. Crucially, the 'alternative' qualities of the veil being highlighted by Muslim women in Britain have failed to make much impression on dominant Western perceptions, including amongst Western feminists³¹⁰. As Ayesha's mimicking summary suggests, an articulate, assertive, intelligent woman wearing a hijab is still very much deemed a contradiction:

+A: A major problem in British society is that there's a huge huge demonisation of Muslims and there's a tendency to put us in uniformed categories. Like, Muslim woman, dressed in black. Covers her face, covers her hair. No identity, isn't allowed to speak. So, when you're sitting on the train and you're reading a newspaper or a good book or even if you're writing, people sort of look and they're just like, "Ugh, she can write, and she can read. And she reads intelligent stuff! And oh my God!"

Reflecting on the section as a whole, the ethnic identities of the respondents have a chameleon like quality. Ayesha provides the most metaphorically striking example in her transition from being 'part of the drugs rave culture with purple hair, hundred thousand earrings and dressing really hip', to being 'all covered up'. Ayesha's personal narrative is representative of overall trends emerging from the empirical study - trends which present the respondents' interaction with Islam as constituting two distinct phases. These can be simply distinguished as a 'distanciation from Islam' and an 'embracement of Islam'. But, there is a prevailing idiosyncrasy that structures both these phases - an engagement of rational discourse which is centrally driven by what Rattansi describes as a 'heightened reflexivity'. This connection between the discourse of rationality and the narratives of the respondents makes it possible to read contemporary Muslim identities as distinctly modern.

³¹⁰see Sara Ahmed's Strange Encounters, (London, Routledge, 2000)

Rational interpretations of Islam and the distinctly modern status of Muslim identities

In the first stage of the respondents' interaction with Islam, the phase that I have called the 'distanciation from Islam', rational discourse is deployed to call into question the reasoning behind specific cultural practices, customs and traditions which feature significantly in defining childhood experiences. The play of rationality is specifically characterised by a 'heightened reflexivity' in which, according to Rattansi, the interaction of multiple axes of identification creates a tension between order and chaos (see p102). For example, chaos ensues when the respondents witness the different policies on the use of corporal punishment at mosque and at school. Other examples discussed earlier include the freedom to develop social relations with individuals outside the family circle, and women's right to control their own movement in public spaces. The respondents associate the contrasting rules and codes of behaviour with specific institutions or cultures, such as the mosque or school, and Western culture or Islamic culture. A rational resolution is sought which culminates in the rejection of Islamic strictures to guide personal behaviour and outlook on life. In the second phase, what I have termed the 'embracement of Islam', the 'heightened reflexivity' is reconfigured in the desire to *locate* oneself, as the chaos ensuing from multiple locations begins to confuse the boundaries between good and bad. Again a rational choice is made and personal stability is restored through the *reinstatement* of Islam as the defining source for locating and negotiating identity.

I should make clear that the connection between rational discourse and the respondents' interaction with Islam is not being made to suggest that the 'right' choice has necessarily been made. In this regard it is useful to recall Gilroy's exposition of how rational actions in modern history have not always resulted in progressive human relations (see pp93-95). Consistent with Gilroy's explanation, the concept of 'rationality' is applied here to describe strategic and calculated choices in response to personal needs and experiences. In that sense I am not proposing that religion, or more specifically Islam, be simply accorded the status of a rational mode of thought. Rather it is the character of the respondents' engagement with Islam that resembles a discourse of rationality. Once deployed to resist the power of Islamic

dictate to control their behaviour, the discourse of rationality is now being played out inside the very meaning of Islam.

Quite distinct from the audience survey the study on young Muslims has afforded an opportunity, albeit again within a historically specific context, to position the work of hybridity theorists within an increasingly visible identity formation, sometimes referred to as the 'revival of Islam', that is all too often associated with pre-modern lifestyles. Further, the identification of rationality as the central organising feature of the narratives under discussion begins to open up the possibility of reading contemporary Muslim identities as distinctly modern experiences - rationality being one of those distinguishing features recognised as marking the shift from pre-modern to modern systems of thought³¹¹. The added connection to Rattansi's notion of a 'heightened reflexivity' opens up a further possibility of reading Muslim identities as in a sense postmodern. For Rattansi a 'heightened reflexivity' positions individuals as being both inside and outside modernity, and this is what distinguishes the postmodern subject from the modern (see p102). It is not appropriate here to contest the particular definition of postmodern proposed by Rattansi. However, his argument that a 'heightened reflexivity' provides a critical insight into the principles of modernity, as well as its contradictions and limitations, can be clearly associated with the particular course that the respondents' identities take. This applies specifically to their awareness of the limitations of rational thought and its inability to unearth a unified truth. Such is the discovery that has led many respondents back to religion, a discovery that is encapsulated in Ishtiaq's concern with "how do you define good and bad" or Noshin's assertion "there not being one unified truth". At the same time, as I have consistently tried to highlight in the course of this chapter, the appropriation of Islam amongst young Muslims embraces the dynamics of critical interaction and cultural change. In that sense their identities need not be associated with the kind of 'blind' submission to religion associated with a pre-modern mode of being and seeing, nor need they be regarded as resisting the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity'.

³¹¹For more focussed and detailed case studies illustrating that ethnic or religious separatisms in contemporary societies are best interpreted as integral to the history of modernity, as opposed to relics of the pre-modern, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Modernity and Ethnicity in India', in Multicultural States, edited by D. Bennett, (London, Routledge, 1998), pp91-110. Also in the same volume, Susan Mathieson and David Attwell, 'Between Ethnicity and Nationhood: Shaka Day and the Struggle Over Zuluness in Post-Apartheid South Africa', pp111-124

The 'return' to religion is perhaps best interpreted as a response to what Gilroy calls the 'antinomies of modernity' i.e. of modernity's inability to fulfil its promise to uncover universal truths (see pp93-95).

Chapter 7

The Importance of Empirical Investigation to Understanding Everyday Cultural Realities

My adoption of an empirical approach in this thesis as a means of examining the work of hybridity theorists has enabled me to contest, review and expand their respective conceptions of identity in the context of social and historically specific everyday realities. As I summarise in the conclusion, my empirically grounded examination has highlighted how the most debated features of 'cultural hybridity', such as 'cultural fragmentation', may unfold in real life to uphold, rather than transgress, racial and cultural hierarchies. At the same time my analysis has also brought more into view some of the less debated aspects of theories of 'cultural hybridity', such as 'location', as being centrally significant to individual negotiations of diverse cultural forms. The purpose of this final chapter is to underline the importance of empirical research for advancing theories of 'cultural hybridity' in the direction intended by hybridity theorists themselves, i.e. of identifying a framework for cultural relations that can be productively mobilised as a basis from which to overwhelm racialised structures of power and subordination.

The chapter consists of four sections. In the first, my concern is to highlight the limitations of analyses and commentaries that offer judgements about people's cultural and political outlooks without any process of interaction with their everyday lives. To do this, I return to Bhabha and Said's commentaries on the cultural politics of Muslims and argue that the vulnerability of their respective interpretations, as highlighted in chapter 6, can be linked to a 'distanciation from the subjects' they write about, i.e. the absence of direct dialogue or interaction with Muslims themselves. I link the empirical shortcomings in Bhabha and Said's commentaries to the work of hybridity theorists, by noting Jonathan Friedman's observation that contemporary theories of 'cultural hybridity' remain removed from everyday reality because they are in the main abstract theorisations based on analyses of creative art forms such as film and literature - in effect a kind of textual analysis³¹².

³¹²Global Crises, The Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp70-89

The implications of Friedman's observation as regards the suitability of applying theories of 'cultural hybridity' to everyday cultural relations are addressed in the second section, when I examine the methodological debates central to the emergence of 'new' audience research. I describe how the work of 'new' audience scholars develops from a critique and rejection of textual analysis as an adequate basis for predicting and interpreting people's behaviour and actions. I use this critique to establish the importance of empirical investigations for advancing theories of 'cultural hybridity' as a position from which to challenge essentialist conceptions of 'race' and their impact on people's lives.

In the third and fourth sections of the chapter, I address what type of empirical methods are most appropriate for examining people's everyday lives³¹³. I confine my analysis to the overall distinction between qualitative and quantitative techniques, and take as my starting point the arguments made by 'new' audience scholars for preferring qualitative methods. In the third section I use Morley's criticisms of the four *ceteris paribus* assumptions underlying quantitative research to summarise the methodological position of 'new' audience researchers. My discussion underlines that preference for qualitative ethnographic methods among 'new' audience researchers is based less on a self-reflexive analysis of individual applications of the ethnographic approach and more on a critique of quantitative techniques. I go on to suggest that the work of the American anthropologist James Clifford provides a useful basis for bridging the methodological gap between empirical 'new' audience studies and abstract theories of 'cultural hybridity'.

³¹³There are a number of established methods for conducting empirical research including questionnaires, interviews and participant observation and debates about their usefulness are well established in the social sciences, in particular in the fields of sociology and anthropology. The aims of my discussion are more modest, given preliminary acknowledgement of the need for more empirically grounded inquiries of 'cultural hybridity' has yet to take place. For key debates about research methods in sociology, see for example, Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, (New York, The Free Press, 1938); Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1967); Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990). For key debates about research methods in anthropology, see for example, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1922); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York, Basic Books, 1973); H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, (Newbury Park, Sage, 1988); Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1996)

In the fourth section I offer a more critical evaluation of the methodological stance of 'new' audience studies. My analysis presents Morley's criticism of the *ceteris paribus* assumptions underlying quantitative research as simplistic in that its focus is the 'passive people meter' which is hardly representative of the variety of quantitative methods. More importantly, I suggest that quantitative research is invaluable in identifying how detailed qualitative insights relate to overall social and cultural trends. My discussion concludes that, instead of an outright preference for one technique over another, it is more productive to explore ways in which qualitative and quantitative methods may complement and accommodate each other's strengths and weaknesses, thereby providing a more comprehensive insight into the structure and significance of everyday social relations.

Empirical Limitations of Said and Bhabha's Interpretations of Muslim Identities

In chapter 6 I drew on my own empirical research into Muslim identities to refute the five main themes through which Said and Bhabha present Muslims as homogenous and unchanging in their cultural outlooks. I now return to Bhabha and Said's commentaries to develop four observations which demonstrate that the vulnerability of their interpretations arises from a lack of empirical rigour.

Firstly, in response to Said and Bhabha's assertions that submission to a unified notion of Islam is the binding feature of Muslim unity, I have already argued that displays of solidarity amongst Muslims are more the result of struggles against racist Islamophobia than on account of an uncritical devotion to Islam (see pp229-246). Moreover, many of the divisions and contentions amongst distinct Muslim groups and individuals can be linked to differences in their interpretations and conceptions of Islam. That there are multiple interpretations of Islam is a point which Said himself acknowledges³¹⁴, and one which is further reinforced by the fact that it wasn't the U.S. or the allies who 'won the war in Afghanistan'. Rather, it was a predominantly

³¹⁴<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,6903,552764,00.html> ('Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners', in *The Observer*, September 16th, 2001 issue). See also essays in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *Muslims in the West*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002). Pnina Werbner challenges the emphasis on 'local' interpretations of Islam, and more specifically Sufi Islam, suggesting that the underlying logic implicit in Sufism is the *same* logic whether in Morocco, Pakistan or Indonesia. See Werbner's, *Pilgrims of Love*, (London, C. Hurst & Co., 2003), p290

'Muslim' army, the Northern Alliance, with help from the U.S. led alliance that overturned the governing Muslim body the Taliban. Thus, it is only by glossing over or, as argued in Chapter 1 (see pp52-54), by 'silencing' the diversity of Muslim voices and subjectivities that Said and Bhabha are able to promote and maintain the notion that Muslims are bound together by their common affiliation to Islam.

Secondly, the angry demonstrations 'on the street' involving Muslims appear to be the sole evidence given by Bhabha and Said to suggest that 'ordinary' Muslims support the anti-Western and anti-modern agenda of the 'terrorists'. In Said's case, the focus on public demonstrations as an indication that 'ordinary' Muslims are supportive of the 'terrorists' objective of establishing Islam as a superior power is all the more surprising given his own acknowledgement that, 'to most people in the Islamic and Arab worlds the official US is synonymous with arrogant power, known for its sanctimoniously munificent support not only of Israel but numerous repressive Arab regimes [...]. Anti-Americanism in this context is not based on a hatred of modernity or technology envy: it is based on a narrative of concrete interventions'³¹⁵. Said's own comments suggest that if there is a common political objective of the 'terrorists' and 'ordinary' Muslims it is not a wholesale opposition to all things 'Western' or 'modern', but the contradictory foreign policies and interventions made by the West led principally by America.

Thirdly, although 'symbolic violence' has undoubtedly become a feature of 'Muslim' protests, the most publicised perhaps being the burning of The Satanic Verses, it does not, as some commentators suggest, link the thinking and actions of 'ordinary' Muslims (whom Said refers to as the 'untutored' religious populations³¹⁶, and Bhabha the 'ancient ascriptive migrants'³¹⁷) with the 'primitive' passions of the 'terrorists'. Here it is useful to reflect on Bhikhu Parekh's insightful discussion of the 'Rushdie affair' in which he puts the symbolic burning of The Satanic Verses into actual context³¹⁸. Parekh notes that the book burning which secured national publicity on

³¹⁵ibid.

³¹⁶Culture and Imperialism, (London, Vintage, 1993), p371

³¹⁷'How Newness Enters the World', in The Location of Culture, (London, Routledge, 1994), p225

January 14th 1989 had in fact been preceded by another public burning of the book about six weeks earlier. Both incidents had been preceded by 'noisy but peaceful protests' which had gone unreported. The second book burning had been organised following advice from a solicitor who had suggested that if national interest was to be aroused, then prior notice should be given to the media. The succession of events charted by Parekh depicts gradual escalation from 'peaceful' to 'dramatic' protests driven by despair at not being taken seriously. From this perspective, the protests do not show a 'primitive' or 'blind' acceptance of religious doctrine, but are the actions of a people who are finding their voices increasingly alienated from 'civilised' debate and 'secular' politics³¹⁹.

Fourthly, both Said and Bhabha suggest that religious quests for emancipation and freedom are self-contained and do not afford the kind of critical freedom provided by secular politics, which is necessary for establishing mutual emancipation. Religion is, therefore, deemed more appropriate for the public as opposed to private realm. Some of the vulnerability of the secularist argument can be highlighted by reflecting on Bhikhu Parekh's reservations towards containing religion within the 'private' sphere and denying it any role in politics.

Firstly, Parekh draws attention to the fact that even in the most advanced Western societies religious persons constitute a majority. This observation draws us to enquire 'why the position of the secular is often asserted more vehemently in relation to Muslim societies?' It is implied that somehow Muslim societies are the last to separate religion from political activity. Such an association can be shown to have little basis when we consider, as Parekh reminds us, that 'ninety per cent of US Congressman claim to consult their religious beliefs before voting on important

³¹⁸Rethinking Multiculturalism, (London, MacMillan, 2000), see chapter 10, pp295-335

³¹⁹The particular interpretation of 'symbolic violence' being proposed here can be further underlined by Said's own participation in the act of stone throwing at the Lebanon-Israeli border. This incident, which took place in July 2000, generated much publicity and controversy about the integrity of Said's status as an intellectual and critic. It is not necessary here to assess the rights and wrongs of Said's actions. What is important to ask is 'whether the act in question, which Said described as a 'symbolic gesture of joy' and 'what tourists do', can be taken as a measure of the critical worth of his scholarly activities'? The simple answer to this is that a lifetime's work cannot be judged on the basis of one single incident. In the same vein, the political allegiances of 'ordinary' Muslims cannot be deduced from the anger or 'symbolic acts of violence' displayed 'on the streets'.

issues'³²⁰. Secondly, in light of the fact that science has not been able to fulfil its promise of unearthing 'rational' solutions to 'modern' problems then religion may have a valuable role to play in the political quest to improve social and economic inequalities. Related to this is a third observation cited by Parekh. That 'religion has been a source of many an emancipatory movement', including 'anti-slavery, anti-*laissez faire* capitalist, anti-fascist, [...], India's struggle for independence under Gandhi, the 1960s civil rights campaigns in the United States, the anti-*apartheid* struggle in South Africa'³²¹ and so on. Fourthly, 'arguments have no weight of their own'. Rather, arguments gain weight or support if individuals feel they can 'reason' with them. This will depend on their personal values, experiences, common sense and judgement. In that sense the strength of an argument is always relative. Hence, Parekh asserts, it is naive to assume that 'secular' reasons are neutral or that they are more neutral than religious ones. For Parekh, given the continued popularity of religion amongst modern populations, it is both pointless and undemocratic to alienate it from the political system. It is far more viable to acknowledge it as a valuable medium through which people make sense of their lives, and to allow it a political voice which is subjected to the same scrutiny as any other form of political representation. Finally, on the question of morality Parekh suggests that, 'at its best' religion can make an immense contribution to the 'rigours of moral life'. In the context of its concern with the 'human soul' religion can act as a 'counterweight' to the very 'modern' pursuits of self-interest and material gain. It thus fulfils a vital function of 'nagging our consciences, requiring us to reflect publicly and critically on our moral practices, and forcing us to consider issues we would happily prefer to ignore'³²².

Parekh's discussion is more comprehensive in its assessment of the secularist thesis than I am able to do justice here. However, his main counter-arguments to the secularist position that religion should be 'scrupulously' excluded from political life suggests that to undermine or deny religion a role in politics is to discriminate against a significant, perhaps even a majority, of citizens thereby creating a 'crisis of legitimacy'. In connection with this it useful to note Tariq Modood's observation that

³²⁰ Rethinking Multiculturalism, (London, Macmillan, 2000), p323

³²¹ *ibid.*, p328

³²² *ibid.*, p329

racism has been complicated still further by contemporary Muslim experiences which have posed an unforeseen challenge to liberal secularism³²³. In the end the secular disdain towards religion does not appear to be based on detailed empirical assessment of the ability, or inability, of the religiously inclined to embrace the principles of democratic politics.

My four overall criticisms suggest strongly that the limitations of Bhabha and Said's commentaries emanate from an absence of critical engagement with the internally differentiated identities and views of the subjects, i.e. Muslims, under discussion. This is not to say that isolated actions or events cannot be commented on without consulting the variety of perspectives of the individuals concerned. However, the problem with Bhabha and Said's commentaries is that they take isolated events such as public demonstrations as indicators of everyday cultural realities without any corroborating process to confirm that their particular interpretations of the street demonstrations are an adequate basis for reflecting on the cultural identities and subjectivities of the protestors. This 'distanciation from the subject' is a criticism more generally levelled at the work of hybridity theorists by Jonathan Friedman. He notes how the work of theorists of 'cultural hybridity' overwhelmingly centres around 'the analysis of literature, of intellectuals, of films, and - not least - of music' thus, 'identity is entirely abstracted from the subject'³²⁴. In other words, much of the work of hybridity theorists is based on a kind of textual analysis³²⁵, which for Friedman is an inadequate basis for theorising about the cultural exchanges and negotiations taking place in people's everyday lives. Friedman's concern can be more forcefully substantiated by referring to methodological debates that have been central to the emergence of 'new' audience research.

³²³ Multicultural Politics, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2005)

³²⁴ 'Global Crises, The Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp74-76

³²⁵ Avtar Brah's Cartographies of Diaspora might be regarded as an exception because of its inclusion of empirical research. But even in Brah's examination the discussion of empirical findings, (into unemployment amongst South Asian youth and South Asian Muslim women's economic activity), is conducted in separate chapters from the more detailed exposition of the dynamics characterising modern social and cultural formations. There is little direct cross referencing between Brah's empirical findings and her delineation of concepts such as 'difference', 'diaspora' and 'location'. The latter is developed largely through reference to academic texts and personal experience.

Preferring Empirical Research Over Textual Analysis for Understanding Everyday Cultural Realities

I noted in chapter 1 that David Morley's study of The 'Nationwide' Audience³²⁶, which highlighted detailed ethnographic research as the way forward, is commonly recognised as marking the beginning of a 'new' era in audience research (see p15). Since the Nationwide study there has been a profusion of empirical enquiries into audience consumption. They have ranged in their focus on different types of media as well as different types of audiences. Dorothy Hobson's research into housewives' use of radio and television³²⁷; Janice Radway's study of women's interaction with romance novels³²⁸; and David Buckingham's work on children's readings of popular television³²⁹, constitute just a few of the more well known. Two elements bind these studies together: firstly, their understanding of the process of meaning construction as a two way process - an outcome of the specific interaction between text and viewer; and secondly, their adoption of qualitative research techniques as the most effective way of getting an insight into the meanings negotiated by individual viewers. With respect to the first of these two characteristics, I noted in chapter 1 that the position of hybridity theorists can be seen to be in synch with the position of 'new' audience researchers (see pp18-19). In sum, both fields of work reject the notion that cultural outlooks and identities can be adequately represented by holistic categories such as male/female, working class/middle class, black/white etc., without examining what those categories mean to the individual concerned. Despite this common ground the two fields of work have advanced from different sides of the methodological spectrum which brings me to the second defining feature of 'new' audience research, i.e. its preference for empirical research.

³²⁶London, BFI, 1980

³²⁷'Housewives and the Mass Media', in Culture, Media, Language, edited by S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis, (London, Routledge, 1980), pp105-114

³²⁸Reading the Romance, (London, Verso, 1984)

³²⁹Public Secrets, (London, British Film Institute, 1987)
Children Talking Television, (London, Falmer Press, 1993)
'Boys' Talk: Television and the Policing of Masculinity', in Reading Audiences, edited by D. Buckingham, (London, Manchester University Press, 1993), pp89-115
Moving Images, (London, Manchester University Press, 1996)

In the previous section I noted that the work of hybridity theorists might be likened to textual analysis. By comparison, it is precisely a departure from textual analysis and the adoption of empirically grounded research that is recognised as one of the hallmarks of 'new' audience studies. For 'new' audience scholars textual analysis is inadequate for examining the meanings arising from the encounter between texts and viewers. Textual analysis, they claim, does not take into account a number of variables which are an integral part of the process through which individuals negotiate meanings from particular texts. The variables range from the social and cultural background of individuals (such as gender, age, class and ethnicity); the context of viewing (such as the company in which texts are viewed)³³⁰; other activities that may be simultaneously engaged (such as housework)³³¹; and past experiences of the act of viewing and/or the subject matter of particular texts³³². The criticism of 'new' audience researchers that the position of the subject cannot be deduced from an analysis of individual texts is precisely Friedman's point when he suggests that, cultural exchanges and negotiations taking place in people's everyday lives cannot be properly understood through an examination of specific cultural texts, be they written, visual or audio.

It is important not to confuse the textual analysis criticised by 'new' audience researchers and that conducted by theorists of 'cultural hybridity'. Such analyses differ in that the former, as exemplified by Screen theory, is indiscriminate, both in terms of the variety of texts that might be selected for analysis - in that they do not have to fit any particular genre or criteria, as well as its comprehension of the audience as an 'undifferentiated mass'. By comparison, theorists of 'cultural hybridity' have been much more calculating in their choice of films, music, novels and academic literature. Their work intentionally draws on texts which explore the

³³⁰see for example, Marie Gillespie, 'From Sanskrit to Sacred Soap: A Case Study in the Reception of Two Contemporary TV Versions of the Mahabharata', in Reading Audiences, edited by D. Buckingham, (London, Manchester University Press, 1993), pp48-74
Marie Gillespie, 'Soap Opera, Gossip and Rumour in a Punjabi Town in West London', in National Identity and Europe, edited by P. Drummond, R. Paterson & J. Willis, (London, BFI, 1993)

³³¹see for example, Ann Gray, Video Playtime, (London, Routledge 1992)
Dorothy Hobson, 'Housewives and the Mass Media', in Culture, Media, Language, edited by S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis, (London, Routledge, 1980), pp105-114

³³²see for example, Jacqueline Bobo, Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995) and Philip Schlesinger et al, Women Viewing Violence, (London, BFI, 1992)

fragmented and heterogeneous aspects of modern identities, and more specifically migrant identities. In addition, unlike Screen theory, such analyses are not conducted to identify how a 'homogenous mass' responds to a particular message, but to gain an insight into the dynamics of modern relations and cultural formations. These qualifications, however, do not invalidate Friedman's point. He is right to pose the question 'how much can we learn about the 'everyday problems of identity' from the analysis of a novel, a song or a film?'- or indeed public protests.

My own reflections above on Bhabha and Said's commentaries suggest that it is precisely the 'distanciation of the subject' from the focus of analysis that limits their respective insights into the cultural politics of Muslims. In pointing this out, I agree with Friedman that the relevance of contemporary theorisations of 'cultural hybridity' to the 'micro-processes of everyday life', and as a way of understanding 'other people's realities', cannot be substantiated without an engagement with 'ordinary' people's lives. Thus, I am arguing that in order for theories of 'cultural hybridity' to advance in the direction intended by their own authors, (i.e. to identify a cultural politics that overwhelms unequal relations of power and subordination), it is imperative that empirical interrogation and methodological scrutiny form an integral part of its debates.

The Strengths of Qualitative Research Methods for Examining Complex Cultural Realities

In the two remaining sections of this chapter I address the issue of which empirical research methods are most appropriate for gaining an insight into everyday processes of meaning construction and identity negotiation. I begin by examining the arguments of 'new' audience researchers who advocate qualitative ethnographic, as opposed to quantitative, research methods as the most suitable for examining the complexity of everyday cultural realities.

The arguments for preferring qualitative methods within 'new' audience studies have been well documented by, amongst others, Ang, Lull, Morley, and Moores³³³. The

³³³Ten Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, (London, Routledge, 1991)

James Lull, *Inside Family Viewing*, (London, Routledge 1990)

David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1992)

main thrust behind the choice of in-depth qualitative research is the perception that the act of viewing cannot be reduced to a series of quantifiable units. As Morley asserts, it is 'methods of investigation such as participant observation and ethnography, traditionally associated with the discipline of anthropology' which enable 'a close understanding of the processes through which communication technologies, such as television, acquire meaning, and of the variety of practices in which they are enmeshed'³³⁴.

Beyond this more general 'methodological consensus'³³⁵ regarding the suitability of the ethnographic approach for investigating media consumption, the actual application of this method across the various 'new' audience studies is vastly different from its more established usage in the field of anthropology, where it was first pioneered by Malinowski in his participant observation study of the Tobriand Islanders³³⁶.

Ethnographic studies undertaken by anthropologists place much emphasis on researchers fully immersing themselves 'in the field' which involves living full-time among the individuals being studied. Another significant feature is the length of observation with most studies lasting between one to two years. In this regard, many 'new' audience studies represent a departure from the type of ethnographic research undertaken by anthropologists. As Moores notes:

[...] new audience ethnography has relied mainly on audio-taped conversations with viewers, listeners and readers which may not last much more than an hour each. The inquiries can sometimes incorporate short periods in the company of media consumers, [...] nevertheless sessions spent talking about television in the sitting room [...] are evidently quite different from two years living amongst the Tobriand Islanders³³⁷.

Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences*, (London, Sage, 1993)

³³⁴ *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, (London, Routledge, 1992), pp173 - 174

³³⁵ *Ien Ang, Living Room Wars*, (London, Routledge, 1996), p36

³³⁶ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922 (1964))

³³⁷ *Interpreting Audiences*, (London, Sage, 1993), p4

Moore goes on to defend the use of the term ethnography to describe the methods of data collection within 'new' audience research. He argues that, although the precise methodologies differ, qualitative audience studies and anthropological research share the same aims in that they are fundamentally concerned with charting and critically analysing the production of meanings in particular social contexts. An important point to note in this respect is that justification for preferring qualitative ethnographic methods has been based more on a critique of the limitations of quantitative techniques, as opposed to self-reflexive analyses of the strengths of individual 'new' audience studies. In the next section I return to address this lack of attention to evaluating the application of the ethnographic approach and its implications as regards inhibiting methodological debates within 'new' audience research (see pp292-297). On the issue of why 'new' audience scholars deem quantitative methods unsuitable for understanding the behaviour of media audiences, the various commentaries list a number of reasons. I do not wish to rehearse these in any detail³³⁸ but some indication of their range and arguments can be provided by noting Morley's identification of the *ceteris paribus* assumptions governing statistical methods of data collection.

From the specific perspective of studying audiences Morley identifies four contentious premises of quantitative research methods. Firstly, he argues that quantitative measurements of audience activity reduce the act of viewing to the subject being in the same room as the television set being switched on. This, Morley suggests, is not a reliable association for deducing that an act of viewing has been engaged. Secondly, desire or willingness to view a programme cannot be inferred from an individual tuning into a particular channel. The television may simply be switched on for background noise, or, the viewer's concentration on a programme may be fragmented by other activities, such as reading the newspaper or ironing. Thirdly, quantitative techniques tend to reduce the viewer's relationship with the text to an 'individual decision-making process'. In relation to this, Morley comments,

³³⁸see for example, James Halloran, ed., *The Effects of Television*, (London, Panther, 1970)
Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, (London, Routledge, 1991)
John Fiske, 'Moments of Television', in *Remote Control*, edited by E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner & E. Warth, (London, Routledge, 1989), pp56-78
Stuart Hall, 'The Rediscovery of "Ideology"', in *Culture, Society and the Media*, edited by M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran & J. Wollacott, (London, Routledge, 1982), pp56-90

'much viewing is, in fact, done in groups, where power is unequally distributed and choices must be negotiated'³³⁹. Fourthly, viewers' decisions are simply differentiated by whether or not they watch a programme and are, therefore, treated as context-free and equivalent. There is no appreciation of the contextual and material disparities across households which invariably impact upon such issues as access, purpose, and significance of media texts and technologies for different viewers. For example, income levels may vary the significance of media consumption in relation to other leisure activities.

For Morley, these *ceteris paribus* assumptions indicate that research methods concerned with systematic data collection tend to approach 'watching television' as 'a one-dimensional activity which has equivalent meaning for all who perform it'³⁴⁰. On the basis of these observations Morley supports the argument of academics such as Towler, Lull, Ang, and Scannell 'that if interpersonal and mass communications are to be read as texts, the surrounding context is the necessary foundation of meaning'³⁴¹. Thus, what is required is 'close-up' research focused on making 'qualitative distinctions' in audience behaviour.

As I have already noted, debates about methodology and concern with empirically grounded examinations of cultural interaction have not been accorded anywhere near the same level of significance in contemporary theorisations of 'cultural hybridity' as they have in 'new' audience studies. A useful basis from which to begin to bridge this methodological distance is, I suggest, provided by current debates within American cultural anthropology³⁴². Here the work of James Clifford³⁴³ might be singled out, for it has already attracted a notable degree of attention from 'new' audience scholars and hybridity theorists alike. The former have been drawn to Clifford's work for its contribution to opening up a series of questions about the power dynamics inherent in

³³⁹Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992), p175

³⁴⁰ibid., p176

³⁴¹ibid., p175

³⁴²see collection of essays in James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986)

ethnographic writing³⁴⁴. They ('new' audience scholars) have tended to cite Clifford's assertions about issues of subjectivity and their impact on the process of observing, documenting and writing up observations made 'in the field' to emphasise the need for more self-reflexive audience ethnographies³⁴⁵. Hybridity theorists have found Clifford's work valuable for another reason: his exploration of the metaphor of 'travel' to emphasise the cosmopolitan character of contemporary cultural formations as well as the unequal relations of power through which they are represented. Clifford's conception of 'culture as a site of travel' is noted by hybridity theorists in support of their own concern with understanding modern cultures as constantly evolving through interaction with 'other' cultures³⁴⁶.

The different angles from which 'new' audience research and hybridity theorists approach Clifford's writings can be linked to the differing priorities and positions from which the two bodies of work proceed. 'New' audience studies devote much attention to debating issues of methodology, while hybridity theorists are predominantly concerned with narrating modern cultures in terms of their fragmented status. This difference does not detract from my own observation of the potential for Clifford's works to provide an avenue through which hybridity theorists may begin to raise questions of method fundamental to their respective enquiries³⁴⁷. For this to materialise, what is required is a shift from a focus on the 'travelling' aspects of cultures, that is clearly documented by Clifford, to an equally significant aspect of his

³⁴³see his 'Travelling Cultures', in Cultural Studies, edited by L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P. Treichler, (London, Routledge, 1992); and Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century, (London, Harvard University Press, 1998)

³⁴⁴The concern with dynamics of power in ethnographic research is an overall feature running across contemporary critiques of 'classic ethnography'. In addition to James Clifford's contributions see also, George Marcus and Michael Fischer, Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986)
Clifford Geertz, Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988)

³⁴⁵see for example, Shaun Moores, Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption, (London, Sage, 1993), pp62-65
David Morley, Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992), pp189-190
Marie Gillespie, Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), pp74-75

³⁴⁶see for example, Avtar Brah, Cartographies of Diaspora, (London, Routledge, 1996), p208
Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, (London, Verso, 1993), p17

³⁴⁷There is also a potential for 'new' audience studies to expand its critical dialogue with Clifford's contributions by paying more attention to his insights into the evolving (travelling) nature of cultures. This may help overcome the ethnocentric character of much 'new' audience research.

works which (and to which 'new' audience studies is attracted) is concerned with advocating more self-reflexive studies of cultures that openly address the issue of 'how cultural analysis constitutes its objects - societies, traditions, communities, identities - in spatial terms and through specific spatial practices of research'³⁴⁸. I should note, of course, that Clifford's work is not without its critics³⁴⁹, but its usefulness lies in efforts to balance empirical observation with cultural theorisation, whilst contesting the parameters and limits of each.

I want to end this chapter with a more critical discussion of the methodological position advocated by 'new' audience researchers in their preference for qualitative over quantitative techniques. To contextualise and delineate my argument, it is useful to consider briefly the origins of quantitative research before assessing 'new' audience critiques.

Re-situating the Quantitative Survey as a Serious Mode of Investigation

Positivist sociologists are generally acknowledged as the first to develop quantitative approaches for studying human behaviour. Central to their investment in quantitative techniques is a belief that the logic, methods and procedures of the natural sciences (such as chemistry, physics and biology), can be adapted to study human beings. Positivists argue that, in the same way that the natural scientist isolates, controls and measures natural variables, so the social scientist can do the same with social variables.

One of the earliest studies applying the principles of natural science to understanding human behaviour was that of Emile Durkheim³⁵⁰. In summary, Durkheim's study undertook a detailed examination of official suicide statistics from various countries in Europe. He observed that the suicide rate in each society was fairly constant, but

³⁴⁸James Clifford, 'Travelling Cultures', in Cultural Studies, edited by L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P. Treichler, (London, Routledge, 1992), p97

³⁴⁹see for example, van der Veer, 'The Enigma of Arrival: Hybridity and Authenticity in the Global Space', in Debating Cultural Hybridity, edited by P. Werbner & T. Modood, (London, Zed Books, 1997), pp92-93. Also in the same volume, John Hutnyk, 'Adorno at Womad: South Asian Crossovers and the limits of Hybridity-Talk', pp127-128

³⁵⁰Suicide: A Study in Sociology, (Glencoe, Free Press, 1897 (1951))

that rates of suicide were significantly different between societies and between different social groups. For example, rates were higher among urban populations, Protestant communities, adults and unmarried individuals, and lower amongst rural populations, Catholic communities, young people and married individuals. By establishing various statistical correlations between suicide rates and the social situations of individuals, Durkheim concluded that suicide was less likely to be committed by individuals with strong community and/or family ties. Durkheim viewed his investigation into the causes of suicide as a clear illustration that social forces can be isolated and treated as observable facts. By identifying consistent and/or irregular patterns between various observable phenomena social behaviour could be explained in terms of cause and effect relationships.

The work of Durkheim and other positivists deems psychological factors or non-observable phenomena, such as people's opinions and motives, unimportant as regards the causes of human behaviour. Because of positivists' emphasis on directly observable behaviour and their belief that social science, like natural science, can be objective and value free, they prefer research methods concerned with quantification and systematic data collection such as questionnaires and structured interviews.

From this brief outline of the rationale underlying quantitative techniques, it is easy to see why 'new' audience researchers have felt little need for structured questionnaires and interviews within the trajectory of their work. For it is precisely the subjective elements in the process of meaning construction, disregarded by positivists and immeasurable through methods geared to collect standardised quantifiable responses, that 'new' audience researchers openly seek to identify and interpret. However, the limitations of quantitative research cannot be overcome by simply adopting qualitative methods. I illustrate this by, firstly, questioning Morley's criticisms of the *ceteris paribus* assumptions underlying quantitative techniques, and secondly, by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the ethnographic approach within 'new' audience studies.

In summary, the four *ceteris paribus* assumptions identified by Morley constitute a simplistic critique of quantitative methods. This is because Morley fails to

differentiate between the variety of statistical data gathering techniques. The 'passive people meter' is the focus for Morley's criticisms, which are presented as though they apply to all quantitative methods. This is misleading. It is not appropriate here to engage in a comprehensive evaluation of the relevance of Morley's comments to each method (e.g. postal survey; telephone questionnaire; head-counting; structured interview) emerging from the 'positivist tradition'. However, two general observations indicate the weakness of Morley's critique.

Firstly, the phrase 'passive people meter' has been coined, as Morley observes, 'to refer to a computerised, camera-like device attached to each set in the household, which uses an 'image recognition' system to identify who is actually present in front of which sets, and when'³⁵¹. The device is equipped to count nothing else other than the number of people in the room when the television is switched on, and is, therefore, open to all of Morley's criticisms. But the singular concern of the 'passive people meter' cannot be taken to be representative of all quantitative techniques. This can be easily illustrated by referring to the questionnaire deployed in my own survey (see Appendix C). It incorporated questions to elicit such varied information as the respondent's personal income (see question 45(b)) and type of household in which they were residing (see questions 47 and 48), as well as the number and type of domestic technologies within the home (see questions 1 and 2) and the company in which individual texts were likely to be consumed (see questions 11 and 23). In chapter 4, some of the responses to my questionnaire were crosstabulated to identify trends and irregularities in respondents' usage of films on videotape. My own survey is thus evidence of how it is possible for quantitative techniques to contextualise and measure audience behaviour as a complex activity which is unequally affected by a number of variables. Being able to obtain this type of information gives rise to a second doubt about Morley's criticisms: that quantitative surveys need not treat viewers as isolated units and their decisions need not be presented as wholly independent of all other factors.

I draw attention to these points not in order to call for a wholesale endorsement for quantitative methods, but to encourage ongoing critical engagement with quantitative

³⁵¹Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies, (London, Routledge, 1992), p174

techniques. Such an engagement needs to be undertaken without losing sight of the different qualities afforded by in depth ethnographic work compared to statistical correlations. In this respect, I do agree with Morley and others that quantitative techniques can only establish associations between variables, and that qualitative inquiries enable a more detailed insight into the precise relationship between different variables, such as, for example, how exactly income levels affect the significance of particular media technologies and texts in people's everyday routines. This admission may be highlighted by 'new' audience scholars as evidence that, because uncovering the specific meanings and reasons for particular audience behaviour and viewer reactions is precisely the objective of their work, quantitative techniques should accordingly be rejected. My response to this is that the particular objective of 'new' audience researchers does not lessen my comments about the reductive way in which they have tended to criticise quantitative methodologies. Nor does it detract from my overall argument that, 'new' audience research, and cultural studies in general, would benefit from a more serious critical engagement with statistical data collection techniques, which I now establish with more force.

Ang points out that, 'studying media audiences is not interesting or meaningful in its own right, but becomes so only when it points towards a broader critical understanding of the peculiarities of contemporary culture'³⁵². Ang's comment is clearly constructed to clarify the purpose and value of studying what might be considered everyday mundane activities such as 'watching television'. She reasons that the audience is not an 'object of study' but along with other routine non-audience practices is a 'discursive trope' which can offer detail insights into the structures of contemporary cultural formations, and therefore, also, the cultural dynamics of contemporary societies. In other words, individual stories or actions are meaningless unless they can be shown to tell us something about the bigger picture. With regard to this it is perhaps useful to point out that most 'new' audience studies make some reference to overall trends. These are sometimes based on anecdotal evidence, as in Bobo's identification of 'black women's overwhelming positive response to The Colour Purple'³⁵³. At other times they draw on actual quantitative data, as in Ang's

³⁵²Living Room Wars, (London, Routledge, 1996), p4

³⁵³Black Women as Cultural Readers, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1995)

albeit implicit reference to audience ratings in order to establish the 'worldwide popularity of Dallas'³⁵⁴. In this sense qualitative research is more generally put into context by reference to quantitative studies or observations. It would therefore be much more appropriate to establish a methodological debate which is not governed by a dismissal of one mode of research in the course of promoting another, but is informed by Gillespie's reasoning that, the methodological aim must be 'to overcome the polarity between qualitative and quantitative methods and to assess their compatibility'³⁵⁵.

There is another fundamental reason why ongoing critical dialogue with quantitative methods would be of benefit to practitioners engaging in qualitative study. It may help them avoid reproducing, in their own work, the limitations and weaknesses levelled at 'positivist' approaches. For example, in spite of their emphasis on documenting the complex and dialogic relationship between text and audience, many qualitative studies have failed to identify and articulate the different readings and positions occupied by individuals in relation to the media beyond the confines of the essentialist categories of age, gender and ethnicity. The weakness permeating a number of studies is aptly summarised in Brunt's commentary on Morley's Nationwide work,

[...] while Morley presents the groups he researches as real social entities with an unstructured empirical mix of gender, age and ethnic identity, he also insists on formally categorising each group for the purposes of analysis in terms of one homogenous class identity - with the result that the real complexity of each group and its collective decodings of the television text is not an object to be investigated, but a problem to be circumvented in order to discover "consistency and similarity of perspective within groups"³⁵⁶.

Brunt's observation underlines the fact that the drawbacks of quantitative research are not simply or automatically overcome by adopting qualitative techniques. The

³⁵⁴Watching Dallas, (London, Methuen, 1985)

³⁵⁵Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p52

³⁵⁶Rosalind Brunt, 'Engaging with the Popular: Audiences for Mass Culture and What to Say about Them', in Cultural Studies, edited by L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P. Treichler, (London, Routledge, 1992), p74

ordering and categorisation of individual responses is something that ethnographic data also has to undergo, and therefore requires as much methodological scrutiny as if it were produced by quantitative methods.

The more specific criticisms Brunt directs at Morley's study indicate a wider methodological complacency pervading 'new' audience research. As Gillespie notes, 'much audience and reception research in cultural studies [...] pays too little attention to methodological issues [...] with little or no reference to how data was gathered, in what type of contexts, from what kind of subjects'³⁵⁷. One of the consequences of this is that much of the empirical work within 'new' audience studies may not always be in synch with the fundamental research principles advocated by its leading scholars. For example, Ang, Morley and others repeatedly criticise quantitative audience studies for divorcing the subject from the actual or 'natural' context of viewing and argue that empirical audience studies should be conducted in the physical setting where viewing is engaged. Yet, as Women Viewing Violence and Bobo's study testify, conducting research in its 'natural' setting is not a feature shared by all 'new' audience studies. In this respect another critical observation to be made is that the emphasis on the 'natural' setting is perhaps simplistically borrowed from the field of anthropology, without any serious assessment of its relevance for measuring audience activity. For instance, although much television consumption is undertaken in the sitting room, a significant amount of critical interaction around television programmes takes place outside of the domestic context, in places as varied as the playground, office or public house. Interestingly Lynn Schofield Clarke in her review of Ellen Seiter's book Television and New Media Audiences³⁵⁸ notes how Seiter in her own empirical research doesn't adequately address her own criticism of many ethnographic 'new' audience studies not meeting the standards of ethnography as it is applied in cultural anthropology. As Clarke points out, Seiter herself relies upon repeated interviews with parents, preschool teachers and day care providers. Clarke argues that this should not be viewed as a weakness but a strength in that 'Seiter perhaps inadvertently enables media scholars to move away from the geographically-

³⁵⁷Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change, (London, Routledge, 1995), p55

³⁵⁸(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000)

limited notions of "culture" as the ideal boundaries within which an ethnography must be conducted³⁵⁹. Thus, the process of meaning construction cannot be confined to the specific moment and space in which the act of viewing takes place. It occurs both before and after the act of viewing, and with individuals who may have been involved in acts of viewing communally, separately, or not at all.

Despite its shortcomings, the methodological stance of 'new' audience studies has provided a useful basis for underscoring the importance of empirical investigation to advancing abstract theories of 'cultural hybridity' as an ideological framework for understanding everyday racial and cultural relations. This is not to suggest that abstract theorising is wholly redundant. The strength of theorising in the abstract lies in the capacity to occupy a creative space to think freely which, in the end, is vital for generating new vocabularies, new perspectives and new outlooks that offer the real possibility of overwhelming already exhausted and often obsolete concepts and structures of interaction and debate. This is in fact one of the strengths of contemporary theories of 'cultural hybridity', in their explicit attempts to break out of the tiresome 'mutually exclusive' terminology for debating dynamics of 'race' and difference. Nevertheless, to exploit the potential of theories of 'cultural hybridity' for disrupting existing structures and relations, such theories cannot remain in the abstract. For them to do so is to run the risk of ambiguous interpretations and judgements about everyday cultural realities. Nowhere is this illustrated more clearly within the content of this thesis than in the vastly different interpretations of Muslim cultural politics offered by Bhabha and Said, two leading advocates of 'cultural hybridity', compared with my own empirical analysis, presented in chapter 6.

³⁵⁹see www.colorado.edu/journalism/mcm/word_papers/seiter-tv-audience-review.doc -

Conclusion

This thesis has contested contemporary theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' in the context of two contrasting aspects of cultural interaction and identity negotiation integral to the everyday lives of sections of the South Asian population in Britain. Although the empirical data drawn upon was generated some eight to ten years ago it has provided a useful context for situating and contesting abstract conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' within contemporary processes of identity formation and negotiation. Moreover, the contrasting nature and focus of the two empirical enquiries, into the use of Indian and popular/mainstream films on videotape and negotiations of *being* Muslim, has brought to light the contradictory and complex ways in which the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' are experienced and negotiated in everyday contexts.

With respect to my central concern in this thesis of assessing the potential for mobilising a countercultural politics built on the principles of 'cultural hybridity', one that disrupts fixed boundaries of 'race' being used as a basis for unequal relations of power and subordination, the empirical findings across the two case studies highlight three fundamental observations. Firstly, they emphasise that there are no guaranteed racially transgressive outcomes arising from the process of hybridisation. It is possible, as underscored by the audience survey presented in chapter 4, that cultural outlooks and subjectivities negotiated through the process of hybridisation may reinforce, as much as overwhelm, racial and cultural hierarchies³⁶⁰. Secondly, these contradictory outcomes demand that to identify and exploit the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' it is necessary to look beyond its most debated and celebrated feature, i.e. the ability to feel at ease and interact with culturally distinct forms. What is required is a more complex understanding of the precise structure and dynamics characterising individual experiences and negotiations of multiple cultural influences - an understanding which is alert to and able to distinguish between, the kind of cross-

³⁶⁰Shalini Puri also makes a similar conclusion in her recent examination of caribbean cultural formations. Puri contests abstract cultural forms, e.g. novels, theatre productions and carnival, not just as expressions of hybridity but also for their contribution to, what she describes as a 'politics of equality'. Her analysis highlights an irresolvable dialectic between discourses of 'complicity' and 'resistance'. See her book, *The Caribbean Postcolonial*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

cultural dialogues that reinforce a hierarchical ordering of racial and cultural differences from the kind of cross-cultural dialogues that oppose and disrupt processes of racialisation and their ideological bases. Thirdly, the empirical contestation of theoretical conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' undertaken in this thesis has brought to light the inadequate attention given to the position and outlook of dominant 'others'. Ultimately a racially transgressive cultural politics can only be effective if it is supported and advanced by individuals in both dominant and subordinate positions.

These three observations are the focus for this concluding section. I take and expand on each in turn to draw out the strengths and limitations of using the work of hybridity theorists as a framework for understanding contemporary dynamics of 'race' on the one hand, as well as identifying a transgressive cultural politics on the other.

The Process of Cultural Hybridisation and the Circumvention of Racial and Cultural Hierarchies

The two empirical studies presented in this thesis both generated evidence highlighting how racial and cultural hierarchies may be circumvented through the process of hybridisation. In the case of the audience survey, it was found that across the sample of respondents there was a relatively high rate of consumption of both Indian and popular/mainstream films. However, there was also a tendency to view Indian films as aesthetically inferior to popular/mainstream films. As such the overall patterns of critical interaction and perceptions of the two categories of film were identified as reinforcing dominant Western discourses which perceive cultures of the East as being inferior to those of the West. The second case study examining young Muslim identities presented a somewhat different, but no less explicit, arrangement of superior/inferior cultures which the respondents were actively trying to distance themselves from. Many of the individuals participating in the second case study expressed dissent towards the ethnically divisive constructions of *being* Muslim asserted by their parents/elders for whom religious affiliation and country of 'origin' were inseparable markers of identity formation creating an even more exclusive identity (i.e. Pakistani Muslim) than one defined simply by religion or country of 'origin'. In this instance whilst there was no endorsement of the West as a superior

entity there was nevertheless a pattern of identity formation upholding mutually exclusive boundaries of group differences which seek to resist inter-ethnic group mixing.

Both these trends, it could be argued, do not correspond to the kind of negotiations of 'cultural hybridity' charted by hybridity theorists. For instance, as I pointed out in chapter 4, the arrangement of Indian and popular/mainstream films along a superior/inferior continuum relates to individual responses to cultural forms produced by other people as opposed to personal cultural expressions or outlooks forged through interaction of multiple cultural locations (see p194). With reference to the exclusive conceptions of 'Pakistani Muslim' identified in the second case study, I established in chapter 6 that this particular identity formation was more akin to Hall's description of ethnicity based on regressive ideas of nationalism (see p259). However, both these respective interpretations of the research findings promote a reductive conception of 'cultural hybridity'. The respective findings should not be viewed as being external to the dynamics of 'cultural hybridity' but as providing a critical insight into the inescapably complex and contradictory ways in which the process of hybridisation unfolds. Here it is useful to present the respective empirical findings in the context of Paul Gilroy's assertion that modern black cultures can be read as both a response to and a reflection of the 'antinomies of modernity'. By doing so it will be possible to begin to identify the dynamics underlying the circumvention of racial and cultural hierarchies within hybrid cultural expressions.

Modern black cultures and the 'antinomies of modernity'

Gilroy's work highlights both the strengths and limitations of positioning modern black cultures as a 'counterculture' to modernity and, more specifically, the dynamics through which systems of racial subordination and discrimination are maintained in contemporary societies. He writes, '[t]he intellectual and cultural achievements of the black Atlantic populations exist partly inside and not always against the grand narrative of Enlightenment and its operational principles'³⁶¹. This emphasis on understanding modern black cultures as both a response to and a reflection of modernity's inability to establish freedom and equality for all, what Gilroy calls the

³⁶¹The Black Atlantic, (London, Verso, 1993), p48

'antinomies of modernity' (see pp93-95), invites an interrogation of black cultural expressions as providing an insight into those features and dynamics of modern relations which continue to suppress narratives of emancipation. In this regard the empirical research presented in this thesis provide an opportunity to single out particular features of modernity which circumvent racial and cultural hierarchies - in sum from the audience survey it is the 'new' logic of capital, and from the study of young Muslim identities it is systems of classification and order which impose a linear arrangement of time/space dynamics.

'New' logic of capital

In chapter 4 I noted that the dynamics behind the greater visible presence of an Indian film culture in Britain supported Hall's observation of the role of advanced capitalism, and in particular its predisposition to satisfy rather than suppress cultural differences. The available evidence reviewed indicated that amongst South Asians in Britain, like other minority ethnic groups, the purchase of new media technologies was significantly higher than the indigenous population. The popularity and pattern of usage of new media technologies amongst migrant populations was specifically linked to the ability to access culturally diverse programmes not satisfied by terrestrial broadcasting but made possible by such technologies as the video recorder and cable/satellite television. However, my observations about the changes in the 'cultures of interaction' surrounding Indian films suggests that the 'new' logic of capital should not simply be applauded for accommodating cultural differences but, recognised and examined as the central terrain on which cultural differences are being articulated and experienced in modern societies. In this regard the particular direction of change currently taking place with regards to the production and consumption of popular Indian films on videotape suggests that the dynamics of capitalism do not afford a space where cultural differences can be articulated without any limitations on their capacity to challenge or disrupt the dominant order.

My analysis specifically identified how the working practices and structures of film production in Hollywood were being used as a framework for introducing changes to the Indian film industry (see pp182-188). Whilst these particular trends did not

threaten the distinctive narrative style of Indian films, such as the centrality of musical and dance sequences, their impact on changing the 'cultures of interaction' surrounding Indian films was more easily discerned. In sum, changes such as the contract secured by Twentieth Century Fox to market and distribute Indian films as well as plans endorsed by the Indian government to introduce multiplex screens could be seen to encourage the cultures of production and consumption of Indian films to become increasingly like the cultures of production and consumption of popular/mainstream films. The likely impact of these trends was linked to a kind of *celebratory* multiculturalism where aspects of migrant cultures, such as food and clothes, become increasingly visible within mainstream society without disrupting the status quo. The significance of these findings for the process of hybridisation is that as Sanjay Sharma observes, 'cultural difference is being articulated in a capitalist social formation which controls and neutralizes counter-cultural movements'³⁶². As such the logic of capitalism itself can be singled out as imposing a certain framework of interaction which controls and limits the ability of migrant cultures to evolve in a manner that intervene specifically Western modes of economic and social interaction as the primary driving force behind cultural change.

The circumvention of superior/inferior continuums within culturally fragmented identities and subjectivities underscores the point that debates about the transgressive capacity of 'cultural hybridity' cannot be confined to simply identifying interaction with distinct cultural forms. This unfortunately has been the popular take-up of 'cultural hybridity' and is reflected in Ashwani Sharma's concern that '[u]nder the rhetoric of hybridity, new forms of ordering have emerged with their own implicit liberal value judgements about cultural hierarchy'³⁶³. Sharma's concern that an uncritical celebration of hybrid ethnic cultures leaves new forms of exploitation and social suffering (re)produced by the logic of contemporary capitalism unchallenged, is an appropriate point to highlight two other features of modernity that suppress racially transgressive cultural change. These can be identified from my study on young

³⁶²'Noisy Asians or 'Asian Noise'?', in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*, edited by S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk & A. Sharma, (London, Zed Books, 1996), p55

³⁶³'Sounds Oriental', in *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*, edited by S. Sharma, J. Hutnyk & A. Sharma, (London, Zed Books, 1996), p29

Muslim identities and relate to systems of classification and order which impress a linear conception of time/space dynamics on modern relations. To illustrate this I want to refer to differences between Shagufta, Ayesha and Noshin's negotiations of the veil and dominant perceptions of veiled women.

Systems of classification and the imposition of linear conceptions of time and space

Popular conceptions which associate the veil as a form of female oppression offer a static interpretation that does not accommodate the 'polyvalency of the veil' - i.e. the veil's meaning and impact on women's lives changes as it is positioned and negotiated in different social and historical contexts. In chapter 6 I reflected on Shagufta, Ayesha and Noshin's changing relationships to veiling and highlighted how their most recent negotiations of the veil, as providing them with a sense of independence and control over their own bodies, stood in contrast to earlier experiences where they had witnessed the use of the veil/hijab in some Muslim societies and households as a means of controlling women's behaviour.

Shagufta, Ayesha and Noshin's narratives further highlighted how dominant reactions to their decisions to wear the hijab represented a tendency to draw on stereotypes through which the veiled woman's identity is predetermined by the act of wearing the hijab and not the personal meaning she herself invests in wearing it. The positioning of the veil as having the same meaning and impact for all times and all places is representative of a system of classification and order which imposes a linear conception of time and space and can be shown to be centrally significant in maintaining ongoing conflicts between 'Islam' and 'the West'. Because on listening to Noshin, Ayesha and Shagufta what emerges is a set of narratives that represent alternative experiences, views and responses to not just the veil, but to the challenges of the modern world. Yet, instead of engaging this difference, which could form the basis for drawing new alliances and fresh insights into modern societies, dominant Western discourses dictate that veiled women are remnants of an oppressive past. In effect what starts off as a highly personal modern encounter with the veil, or *being* Muslim, becomes inserted into a common sense, modern versus premodern, framework of debate. The result being that veiled women are denied the opportunity to explore their relationship to the veil in critical dialogue with women of other

cultural and political persuasions as most of their time is spent justifying their existence and convincing others they really are not oppressed. The more these dynamics intensify, veiling becomes a matter of principle, and 'unveiling' becomes an act of conforming or submitting to Western conceptions of femininity. And so the cycle of conflict between Islam and the West goes on. Ayesha asserts the point succinctly when she says:

+A: I personally believe that the postmodern really really does reinforce orientalist stereotypes. You know, particularly with globalisation and mass media and consumerism. It reinforces this sort of, yes freedom and restrictiveness, you know freedom is good, restrictiveness is bad, you have the choice, you have the this. But, it's just like, oh ironically when I have made the choice to choose Islam as my way of life I am shunned for it.

This cycle of interaction whereby alternative experiences of the veil are suppressed by linear conceptions of time/space dynamics was a key observation identified in chapter 6 running across the experiences of the respondents participating in the second case study. The respondents relayed a huge distance between their personal negotiations of a Muslim lifestyle and dominant perceptions of what constitutes *being* Muslim. This distance often resulted, as Mustafa's narrative vividly highlighted (see pp222-225), in personal and alternative 'routes' (such as love and respect as opposed to blind submission) to foregrounding Islam as the primary axis of identification being undermined by a highly racialised framework of interaction. Thus, experiences of *being* Muslim become predominantly framed in an acrimonious context, of constantly challenging racial stereotypes of Muslims which overshadow the diverse and culturally fragmented negotiations of *being* Muslim.

The above observations about the circumvention of racial and cultural hierarchies on the one hand, and the suppression of racially transgressive identities by dominant discourses on the other, pose two challenges for identifying and advancing the transgressive capacity of 'cultural hybridity'. The first is to distinguish between negotiations of multiple cultural influences that reinforce superior/inferior continuums of racial differences from those that disrupt mutually exclusive boundaries of 'race'.

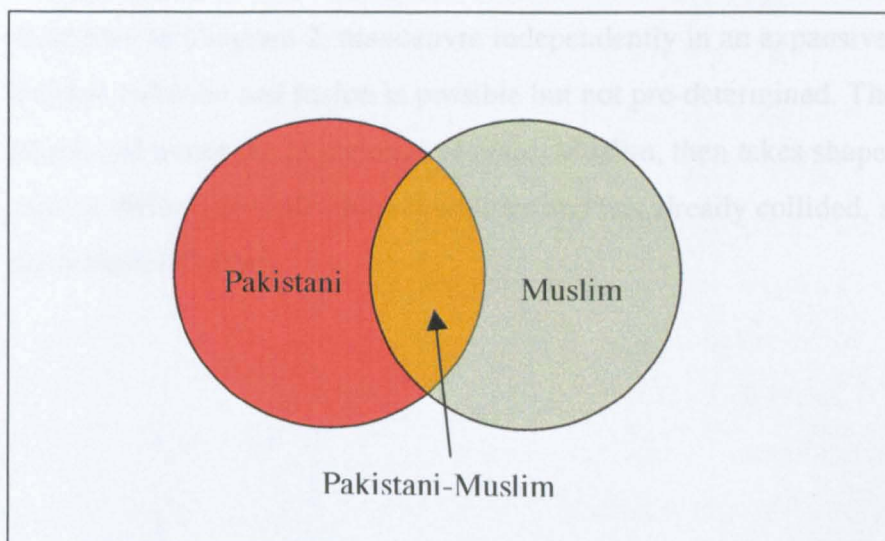
And the second is to break the power of dominant discourses to suppress the impact of contemporary social and cultural formations that disrupt established boundaries of 'race'. I address these two challenges in turn.

Distinguishing Two Structures of Cross-Cultural Interaction

I have already noted that a fundamental observation emerging from the two pieces of empirical research is that 'cultural hybridity' does not guarantee racially transgressive outcomes because just as it is possible for the negotiation of multiple cultural influences to transgress racial boundaries it is also possible for the negotiation of multiple cultural influences to result in more exclusive boundaries of 'race'. Having said that, the contrasting outcomes provide a position from which to make a theoretical distinction between dynamics of hybridisation that open up possibilities for racially transgressive cultural outlooks to emerge from those that circumvent a hierarchical organisation of racial and cultural differences. To unpack this distinction I want to reflect on the overall generational differences emerging from the second case study with respect to the positioning of Islam in relation to other axes of identification. The generational differences and what they tell us about different structures of cross-cultural interaction are best illustrated through two Venn diagrams.

The first Venn diagram (see Diagram 1) represents the respondents' descriptions of the process of identity negotiation engaged by their parents/elders in which 'Pakistani' and 'Muslim' are inseparable markers of identification.

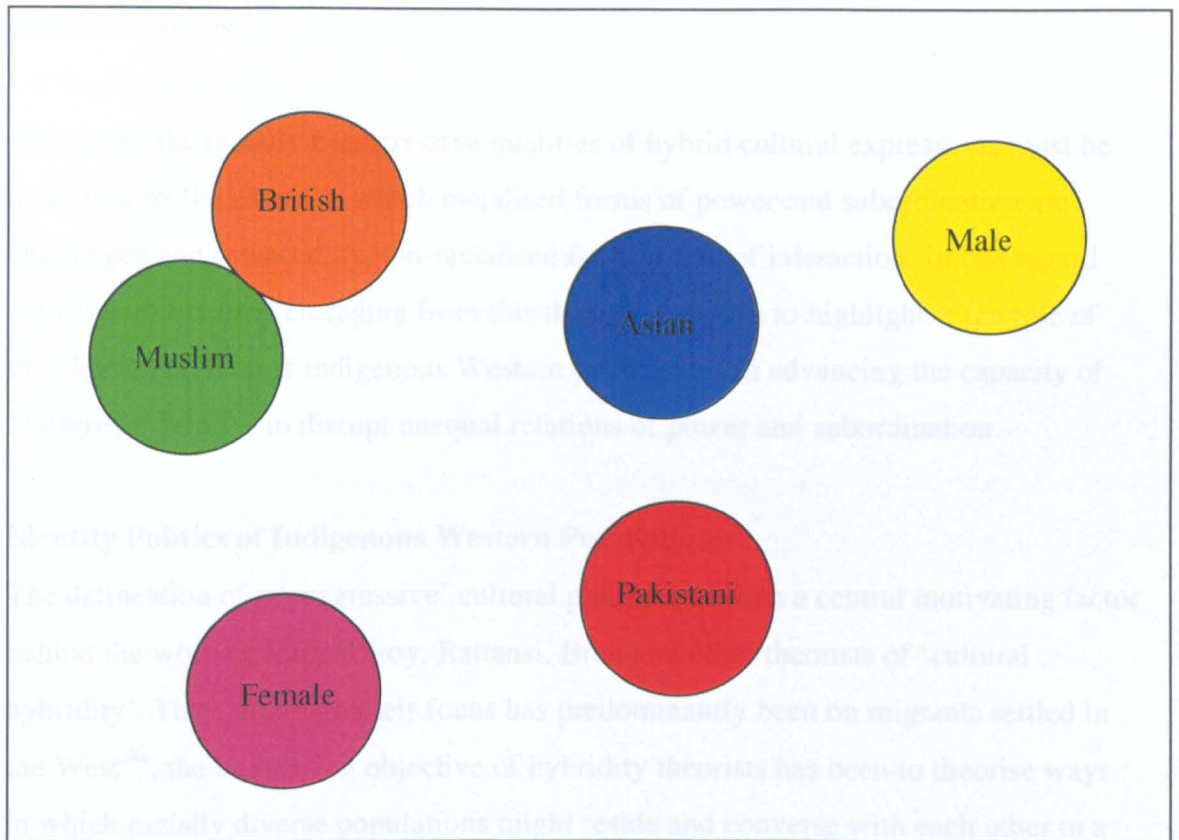
Diagram 1



In the above illustration, interaction of the two axes of difference is organised such that being 'Pakistani Muslim' becomes confined to the exclusive space marked by the overlapping of the two entities. Specific instances relayed by the respondents such as affiliations to local mosques being determined by 'country of origin'; or, celebrating Eid on a particular day because the rest of the family is going to do it; or, restricting choice of marriage partners to 'Muslims' whose family share the same national heritage as one's own, expose how the interdependency of axes of difference can actually function to establish more exclusive identities. The process is perhaps best described as a kind of *cultural merger* which, as the Venn diagram vividly exposes, establishes an 'inner' circle. And this is the structure of cultural interaction being imposed on the respondents by their parents. The introduction of additional axes of difference within this particular structure would simply create more and more exclusive identities - i.e. the presence of additional sets simply decreases the overlapping space.

With this background in mind it is possible to present the respondents' objections to being described in hyphenated terms as a direct outcome of their struggle to resist more exclusive cultural boundaries. Beyond this their own negotiations of *being* Muslim signify a reorganisation of the particular structure of cross-cultural interaction being imposed upon them. The respondents' desires to *authenticate* Islam and free it from 'foreign' influences, as described in chapter 6 (see pp254-258), enables the category Islam, or Muslim, to float more independently amidst a variety of other axes of difference. The Venn diagram is thus revised in that sets no longer overlap, but as illustrated in Diagram 2, manoeuvre independently in an expansive space where cultural collision and fusion is possible but not pre-determined. The meaning of Islam, and hence the experience of *being* Muslim, then takes shape depending on the axes of difference with which it collides and has already collided, and the character of the actual collisions.

Diagram 2



The contrasting structures and outcomes of cross-cultural interaction described above reinforce a main argument running across my analysis of the two case studies that the popular take up of ‘cultural hybridity’ with its focus on identifying the fusion of distinct cultural forms has perhaps detracted attention away from where our focus should be in assessing the transgressive qualities of hybrid cultural formations. This was, in fact, a main weakness identified in Said and Bhabha’s commentaries on the cultural politics of Muslims (see pp279-283). Their respective interpretations of the public unity expressed by Muslims as symbolising a homogenous conception of Islam failed to acknowledge the internal differences and negotiations of *being* Muslim amongst the Muslim protestors. More importantly, as the empirical findings of the second case study emphasise, the foregrounding of one overriding axis of identification such as Islam does not foreclose the possibilities of cross-cultural dialogues or racially transgressive cultural outlooks. In that sense the value of using a structure of cross-cultural interaction as presented in Diagram 2 is that it draws the focus of emphasis away from establishing that axes of identification have overlapped, or fused, and on to tracking the precise character of how different axes of

identification may have intermingled and how they may have transformed each other's meanings.

Ultimately the racially transgressive qualities of hybrid cultural expressions must be measured by the extent to which racialised forms of power and subordination are challenged and replaced by non-racialised frameworks of interaction. In this regard the final observation emerging from this thesis that I wish to highlight is the role of the identity politics of indigenous Western populations in advancing the capacity of 'cultural hybridity' to disrupt unequal relations of power and subordination.

Identity Politics of Indigenous Western Populations

The delineation of a 'progressive' cultural politics has been a central motivating factor behind the work of Hall, Gilroy, Rattansi, Brah and other theorists of 'cultural hybridity'. Thus, although their focus has predominantly been on migrants settled in the West³⁶⁴, the underlying objective of hybridity theorists has been to theorise ways in which racially diverse populations might reside and converse with each other in a manner that embraces 'cultural difference' and at the same time renounces practices of oppression and discrimination. For example, Brah's conception of the 'universal' within the particular; Gilroy's vision of global emancipation; Rattansi's call for the de-essentialisation of ethnicity; and Hall's identification of 'new ethnicities' as central to the erosion of racial hierarchies, all advance the notion of shared values, or in Brah's words 'commonalty of conditions', amongst people of different backgrounds and status. In this regard there is a very important part of the objective set by hybridity theorists that has yet to be seriously interrogated within their work i.e. the identity politics of indigenous Western populations.

In making this point it should be noted that specific aspects of the work of the writers examined in this thesis were drawn upon in preceding chapters (such as Gilroy's description of the 'frog's perspective' (see pp169-172); and Rattansi's observation about the 'intertwining of racist and anti-racist discourses' (see pp222-225)) to pose critical questions about the impact of dominant Western identities and subjectivities

³⁶⁴On this point, as was noted in chapter 1, Rattansi's work can be differentiated from the other writers in that his postmodern frame does not foreground the experiences of migrants. Having said that, even

on the process of 'cultural hybridisation'. It is also fair to acknowledge that Brah's concept of 'diaspora space' in which the native becomes a diasporian as much as the diasporian becomes a native, and Rattansi's 'postmodern frame' which is careful not to foreground the position of one ethnic group over another to make sense of modern relations, both seek to balance the weight of emphasis between 'coloniser' and 'colonised', according each a significant role in shaping a future where an individual's position in society is not determined by categories of 'race'. However, these theoretical concessions within the respected works have not resulted in any decisive shift in contemporary debates of 'cultural hybridity' which addresses the fact that a more comprehensive insight into the racially transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' can only be gleaned by expanding the current focus on the 'migrant condition' to include contestations of 'cultural hybridity' from the position of the dominant 'other'. The importance of this point was underscored in the second case study which highlighted how diverse Muslim subjectivities and identities signifying Hall's conception of a 'politics of representation' were being suppressed by dominant discourses (see pp239-245). These findings drew attention to the fact that if we are to emphasise the 'drawing of alliances' between two opposing positions, i.e. dominant and subordinate, then we need to be able to theorise 'shifts' from the perspective of both those positions. This is a complex and contradictory task to grasp, let alone begin to engage with. Its complexity might be best illustrated through reference to Gilroy's appropriation of the 'frog's perspective' and the development of a new notion – the 'giraffe's perspective'.

The significance of the 'giraffe's perspective' to the transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity'

Gilroy utilises the notion of the 'frog's perspective' to describe the position of blacks as 'looking from below upward' (see pp96-97). Using this analogy it might be argued that the position of 'whites' reflects that of a 'giraffe's perspective', *looking from above downward*. A cultural politics committed to establishing non-racialised and more equal relations must be able to envisage how these two positions, whose historical outlook and foresight has been shaped from opposite ends of the 'colonial encounter', can arrive at a shared conviction to overcoming ongoing racisms. That the

in Rattansi's work there is a tendency to focus on the migrant perspective to identify progressive

'migrant condition' has been the predominant focus for contemporary theorisations of 'cultural hybridity' indicates an overriding gap within this work if indeed it is to provide an avenue through which to advance racially transgressive cultural change.

Even if, 'migrants' or diaspora formations can be referred to as 'prototypes' for developing more democratic relations and a progressive cultural politics, theorising a transgressive cultural politics from the perspective of migrants can only be effective if it can be shown to have resonance with the identities and subjectivities of indigenous Western populations. In reality there are obvious contradictions involved in foregrounding one perspective as a position from which to chart the journey of two opposing positions to a shared political location - one cannot simply acquire the insight of the other. What is in effect required is a contestation and understanding of 'cultural hybridity' from both the 'frog's' and 'giraffe's' perspectives charting their respective 'routes' to a shared political location. And it is more than likely that as the journey to a progressive cultural politics is charted from the position of the 'giraffe's perspective' that there is recourse to identify and develop new notions that are vastly distinct from 'double consciousness'; 'dislocation' and perhaps even 'hybridity' and 'diaspora'.

The notion of the giraffe's perspective indicates that contemporary conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' provide an incomplete framework for envisaging a transgressive cultural politics built on the principles of hybridity. Moreover, the current work on 'cultural hybridity' may have encouraged more complex conceptions of the black subject but the focus has still very much remained on the 'migrant' for charting a future where people's life chances are not defined by categories of 'race'³⁶⁵. In that

notions of culture and politics as in his support for Hall's conception of 'new ethnicities'.

³⁶⁵As some writers have argued (see for example, Richard Dyer 'White', in Screen (vol. 29, no.4, Autumn 1988); Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in Culture, Globalisation and the World System, edited by A. D. King, (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp41-68; and Clare Pajaczkowska & Lola Young, 'Racism, Representation, Psychoanalysis', in 'Race', Culture and Difference, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, (London, Sage, 1992), pp198-219)), the dearth of material describing European cultures and identities, and more specifically notions of 'Englishness' and 'whiteness', is not because the indigenous populations of Europe are any less ethnic, racial or cultural than people from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean. Rather, it is due to a "denial of imperialism... the blankness of the identity of empire covers an ambivalence which is often unconscious, and which, consequently, can most readily be perceived in the representations it creates of the colonial 'other'" (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992: p.202). The steady growth in literature examining historical constructions of white identity in recent years may provide a useful resource to begin to expand conceptions of 'cultural hybridity' from the perspectives of white people. See for example, Catherine

sense the foregrounding of the 'migrant condition' has perhaps inadvertently reinforced mutually exclusive experiences of 'race' and culture which is precisely the scenario that contemporary theories of 'cultural hybridity' have been trying to overcome.

The empirical research presented in this thesis has underscored that whilst the work of hybridity theorists provides a framework through which to conceive how 'races' and cultures do not, and need not, evolve in mutually exclusive ways, their work has been unable to make any significant interventions to the everyday racialised realities of blacks living in the West. The primary focus on the creative cultural expressions of the children of post-war migrants whose visibility in mainstream Western discourses has been encouraged by the 'new' logic of capitalism has proved an inadequate position from which to respond to alternative narratives of modernity and also crucially of 'hybridity'. The subtle ways in which the process of hybridisation unfolds, as highlighted by the recreation of an Indian film culture by post-war migrants as well as the reinterpretation of the teachings of Islam amongst young Muslims, have not only failed to attract attention in the work of hybridity theorists but sometimes (as in Gillespie's interpretation of the desire of Asian elders to recreate cultural traditions, and Bhabha and Said's commentaries of the cultural politics of Muslims) been read as antagonistic to the principles of 'cultural hybridity'. Moreover, it is these more subtle negotiations of cultural differences that have been shown in this thesis to hold the most promise for overcoming unequal relations of power and subordination. In that sense to appreciate the racially transgressive character of hybridity it is necessary to move attention away from identifying the ease with which individuals may interact with multiple cultural influences to examining how individuals define/negotiate the meanings of specific axis of identification.

Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002); Ruth Frankenberg, ed., *Displacing Whiteness*, (North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1997); Richard Dyer, *White*, (London, Routledge, 1997); Vron Ware and Les Back, *Out of Whiteness*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002)

In essence, this thesis has highlighted that negotiations and experiences of 'cultural hybridity' are much more complex and contradictory than envisaged in current debates. Borne out of the critical limitations of the anti-racist and multicultural initiatives of the 1970s and 80s (as signified by Hall's notion of the 'end of the essential black subject') the body of work examined in this thesis remains a very second generation black British conception of 'cultural hybridity'. The limitations emanating from this for identifying and exploiting the racially transgressive potential of 'cultural hybridity' are only partially touched upon by the observations above about the 'giraffe's perspective'. For, the effectiveness of 'cultural hybridity' to disrupt racialised structures of power and subordination once and for all is dependant upon the ability to respond to and politically unite a variety of perspectives and positions from which the modern condition of 'cultural fragmentation' is experienced. This would require contestations of 'cultural hybridity' from not just the position of both blacks and indigenous populations of the West but also non-migrants/indigenous populations of the East, Western migrants settled in the East, twice migrants and so on.

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APPENDIX A

Pilot Questionnaire

SOUTH ASIAN FILM / VIDEO AUDIENCES

ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a three year research project funded by Middlesex University and the British Film Institute.

The purpose of the research is to identify the ways in which people of South Asian descent make use of video tapes. The kind of things we want to find out about South Asian audiences includes the type of films watched on video tape; the effects of cable and satellite television on the use of video tapes; the use of video tapes in relation to watching television or going to the cinema and so on.

The questionnaire does not ask you to give your name and address and so **COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY IS GUARANTEED.**

COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When filling in the questionnaire it is important that you answer the questions as they apply to you, even though you may live with people whose choice and preferences of films and television programmes may differ from yours.

Most of the questions require you to answer by ticking the appropriate box or boxes. Please read the small print in brackets which will tell you whether you are allowed to tick more than one box.

There are a few questions which require you to provide more detailed answers. You can answer these questions by writing in the space provided.

On completing the questionnaire place it in the pre-paid provided envelope and post it to us as soon as possible.

If you require further information or would like to be kept informed on the progress of this research then please write to:

Bilkis Malek
Middlesex University
White Hart Lane,
London
N17 8HR

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION.

8. What is your highest educational qualification?

- (please tick one)
- C.S.E.'s
 - 16+
 - O level
 - G.C.S.E.
 - A level
 - B.T.E.C.
 - G.N.V.Q.
 - H.N.D.
 - B.A./B.S.C.
 - M.A./M.S.C.
 - Ph.D
 - Other

(please specify)

9. Which political party do you vote for?

- (please tick one)
- Conservative
 - Labour
 - Liberal Democrats
 - Green
 - None
 - Other

(please specify)

10. (a) What is your occupational status?

- (please tick one)
- employed full time
 - employed part time
 - self-employed
 - government training scheme (go to question 11)
 - unemployed (go to question 11)
 - housewife/househusband (go to question 11)
 - full time student (go to question 11)
 - part time student (go to question 11)
 - retired (go to question 11)
 - other

(please specify)

(b) Take a look at the following categories and tick the box which best describes your main occupation:

(please tick one)

higher managerial / professional
 eg. managing director; barrister; professor;
 principal; doctor; chief executive

intermediate managerial / professional
 eg. lecturer; social worker; teacher; estate
 agent; computer programmer; journalist;
 ward sister; police inspector; bank
 manager; shop owner / manager

junior managerial/ professional
 eg. factory supervisor; research assistant;
 police constable; nurse

skilled manual workers
 eg. engineer; plumber; painter/ decorator

semi and unskilled workers
 eg. shop assistant; postmen/ women
 waiter/ waitress; cleaner

If you are not sure which category best describes your occupation then write down your job title here:

11. (a) What type of accommodation do you live in?

(please tick one)

- own private house/flat
- guardian/parents' private house/flat
- rented council house/flat
- rented private house/flat
- hostel
- other

_____ *(please specify)*

(b) How long have you lived at your present address?

_____ *(please specify)*

12. (a) How many people (including yourself) live in your household?

_____ *(please specify)*

(b) Please provide the following details of members of your household:

<u>list each persons</u> relationship to you (eg. father, daughter, friend, partner)	<u>male</u> <i>(please tick one for each person)</i>	<u>female</u> <i>(please tick one for each person)</i>	<u>their age</u>	<u>their occupation</u> <i>(please enter the appropriate number from the key below)</i>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

Key (for Occupation)

1. **higher managerial / professional**
 eg. managing director; barrister; professor; principal; doctor; chief executive

key continued on page 4

2. Intermediate managerial / professional

eg. lecturer; social worker; teacher; estate agent; computer programmer; journalist; ward sister; police inspector; bank manager; shop owner / manager

3. junior managerial/ professional

eg. factory supervisor; research assistant; police constable; nurse

4. skilled manual workers

eg. engineer; plumber; painter/ decorator

5. semi and unskilled workers

eg. shop assistant; postmen / women; waiter / waitress; cleaner

6. other

student; retired; housewife / househusband; government training scheme; unemployed

If you are not sure which category best describes the persons occupation then write down their job title instead of a number.

SECTION B: NEWSPAPERS / MAGAZINES / RADIO

13. Take a look at the following list of newspapers.
 Tick one box for each newspaper you read to indicate how often you read each paper.
 Use the blank spaces at the end of the list to write the names of any other newspapers that you may read.
 Don't forget to tick a box for each addition you make.

(please tick one box for each newspaper you read)

Newspaper	every day	more than once a week	once a week	fort- nightly	once a month	occas- ionally
Daily Express	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Mirror	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Sport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Star	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Telegraph	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evening Standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Independent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Sun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Today	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian Times			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eastern Eye			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gujerati Samaacha			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independent on Sunday			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observer			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Express			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Telegraph			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Times			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weekend Guardian			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Voice			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Please write the names of the magazines you read regularly (if you do not read any then please write 'none' next to 1.):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

15. Take a look at the following list of radio stations.
 Tick one box for each radio station you listen to, to indicate how often you listen to each station.
 Please use the blank space at the end of the list to write the names of any other radio station(s) that you may listen to. Don't forget to tick a box for each addition you make.

(please tick one box for each radio station you listen to)

	most days	at least once a week	occas- ionally
BBC Radio 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BBC Radio 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BBC Radio 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BBC Radio 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BBC Radio 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Capital FM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunrise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spectrum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jazz FM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classic FM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION C: VIEWING/LISTENING EQUIPMENT

16. How many of the following pieces of equipment do you have in your home?

(please tick one per column)

	television	video	radio	hi-fi/stereo	computer	satellite receiver	cable box
none	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
one	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
two	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
three	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
four	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
more than four	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. If there is a computer (or computers) in you home, what do you use your computer(s) for?

(please tick all that apply)

- There are no computer(s) in my home
 I do not use the computer
 word processing
 computer games
 desk top publishing
 accounts
 music
 other(s)

(please specify)

18. Please specify how many of each type of equipment are:

(please enter the number)

	television	video	radio	hi-fi/stereo	computer	satellite receiver	cable box
rented	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
bought	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
gifts	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
borrowed	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

19. Please specify how many of each type of equipment are in which rooms:

(please enter the number)

	television	video	radio	hi-fi/stereo	computer	satellite receiver	cable box
lounge	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
sitting room	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
own bedroom	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
other bedrooms	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
kitchen	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
bathroom	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
other rooms	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

SECTION D: FILMS & VIDEOTAPES

20. Do you ever watch films on video tape?

- Yes (complete the rest of this section)
 No (go to section E)

21. (a) Do you ever rent or borrow films on video tape?

- Yes
 No (go to question 22)

(b) Do you or any member(s) of your household have membership for any of the following?

(please tick one for each category)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
public library with video section	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
video shops specialising in Indian films	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
mainstream video shops eg. Blockbusters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
local shops eg. grocers / newsagents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	

(please specify)

(c) How often do you rent or borrow films on video tape from each of the following categories?

(please tick one for each category)

	every day	more than once a week	once a week	fort-nightly	once a month	occasionally	never
family or friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
public library with video section	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
video shops specialising in Indian films	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
mainstream video shops eg. Blockbusters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
local shops eg. grocers / newsagents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other(s) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(please specify)

22. (a) Do you ever buy films on video tape?

- Yes
No (go to question 23)

(b) Where do you buy films on video tape from?

(please tick all that apply)

- video shops
local shops
eg. grocers / newsagents
High Street Stores
eg. W H Smiths
video shops specialising
in Indian films
mainstream video shops
eg. Blockbusters
other(s)

_____ *(please specify)*

(c) Please give the titles of the films on video tape you have bought in the last twelve months:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

23. How often do you watch films on video tape?

(please tick one)

- every day
more than once a week
once a week
2-3 times a month
less than once a month
occasionally

24. Which days of the week are you most likely to watch films on video tape?

(please tick all that apply)

- weekdays
Saturday
Sunday
no specific day

25. What time of day are you most likely to watch films on video tape?

(please tick all that apply)

- morning (9am to 12pm)
afternoon (12pm to 5pm)
early evening (5pm to 8pm)
evening (8pm to 11pm)
after 11pm

26. (a) What factors influence your choice of film?

- (please tick all that apply)*
- actors/actresses
 - director
 - themes/issues
 - storyline
 - language
 - other(s)

_____ *(please specify)*

_____ *(please specify)*

(b) What type of films do you like to watch?

- (please tick all that apply)*
- horror
 - science fiction
 - romance
 - action
 - comedy
 - true stories
 - musicals
 - western
 - thriller
 - fantasy
 - cartoon
 - martial arts
 - others

_____ *(please specify)*

27. With reference to Indian and mainstream Hollywood films on videotape which of the following statements applies to you?

- (please tick one)*
- I only watch Indian films and never watch mainstream Hollywood films
 - I only watch mainstream Hollywood films and never watch Indian films
 - I watch mainly Indian films and occasionally mainstream Hollywood films
 - I watch mainly mainstream Hollywood films and occasionally Indian films
 - I watch about the same number of both Indian and mainstream Hollywood films
 - I never watch Indian films and I never watch mainstream Hollywood films

28. How often do you watch films on video tape classified as:

(please tick one per category)

	most days	at least once a week	occasionally	never	don't know
U	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. Who are you most likely to watch films on video tape with?

- (please tick one)*
- on your own
 - spouse/partner
 - parents
 - children
 - other family
 - friend(s)
 - other(s)
 - depends on type of film

_____ *(please specify)*

_____ *(briefly explain)*

30. (a) Do you ever watch films on video tape at someone else's home?

Yes _____
(please specify who)

No (go to question 31)

(b) Do the films on video tape you watch in your own home differ in any way from those you watch elsewhere?

Yes

No (go to question 31)

(c) If Yes, briefly explain how they differ: _____

31. (a) What other types of videos do you watch, other than films?

(please tick all that apply)

I don't watch any other type of videos (go to question 32)

music videos

keep fit videos

sports videos

cartoons

television programmes

other(s)

(please specify)

(b) Tick the box which best describes how often you watch these videos:

(please tick one box for each type of video you watch)

	every day	more than once a week	once a week	fort-nightly	once a month	occasionally
music videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
keep fit videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sports videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cartoons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
television programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. Do you ever use your video recorder to record programmes from:

(i) television? Yes _____
(What sort of programmes)

No _____
(briefly explain why you don't record programmes off television)

(ii) cable/satellite tv? Yes _____
(What sort of programmes)

No _____
(briefly explain why you don't record programmes off cable/satellite tv)

SECTION E: CABLE/SATELLITE TELEVISION

33. Is your area wired for Cable?

- Yes
No (go to Section F)
Don't know

34. Does your household subscribe to cable/satellite television?

- Yes (go to question (a))
No (go to question (b))

(a) If yes, briefly outline the reasons why you or members of your household decided to subscribe to cable/satellite television **(and then go onto question 35)**:

(b) briefly outline the reasons why you or members of your household decided not to subscribe to cable/satellite television **(and then go onto section F)**:

35. How long has your household been subscribing to cable/satellite tv?

(please tick one)

- less than 6 months
- 6 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- more than 4 years

36. Which additional channels are purchased by your household?

(please tick all that apply)

- none
- Sky Movies
- Sky Movies Gold
- The Movie Channel
- Home Video Channel
- TV Asia
- Other(s)

_____ (please specify)

37. Which channels do you use the **most**? List up to 4 starting with the most frequently viewed:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

38. How has cable/satellite tv affected your use of the following?

(please tick all that apply)

- (a) **television**
- stopped watching specific programmes
 - watch less television in general
 - video tape more television programmes
 - has had no effect

(please tick all that apply)

- (b) **video tapes**
- purchase fewer Indian films on video tape
 - purchase fewer mainstream/Hollywood films on video tape
 - rent fewer Indian films on video tape
 - rent fewer mainstream/Hollywood films on video tape
 - has had no effect

(please tick all that apply)

- (c) **cinema**
- make fewer visits to the cinema
 - make same number of visits but watch fewer Indian films
 - make same number of visits but watch fewer mainstream/Hollywood films
 - has had no effect

39. On **average** how many films do you watch on cable/satellite tv?

(please tick one)

- more than one per day
- one per day
- 3-4 per week
- 2-3 per month
- less than one per month
- hardly ever/never

40. What kind of films are you most likely to watch on cable/satellite tv?

(please tick all that apply)

- Indian films
- mainstream/Hollywood films
- other(s)

_____ *(please specify)*

SECTION F: CINEMA

41. On **average** how often do you go to the cinema?

(please tick one)

- more than once a week
- once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- once a month
- occasionally
- twice a year
- once a year
- never
- other

(go to section G)

_____ *(please specify)*

42. Who are you most likely to go to the cinema with?

(please tick one)

- on your own
- spouse/partner
- parents
- children
- other family
- friend(s)
- depends on type of film

_____ *(briefly explain)*

43. What kind of films are do you **tend** to watch at the cinema?

(please tick all that apply)

- Indian films
- mainstream/Hollywood films
- other(s)

_____ *(please specify)*

44. Which cinema(s) are you most likely to go to?

(please tick one)

- local cinema(s)
- West End cinema(s)
- other(s)
- depends on type of film

_____ *(please specify)*

_____ *(briefly explain)*

SECTION G: TELEVISION

N.B. The questions in this section are related to British terrestrial television i.e. BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4, NOT cable/satellite television.

45. On **average** how much time do you spend watching television in a week?
Tick one box for each of the three days:

	(please tick one for each column)		
	weekday	Saturday	Sunday
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
less than 1 hour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 to 2 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 to 3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 to 4 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 to 5 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
more than 5 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

46. Who are you most likely to watch television with?

	(please tick one)
on your own	<input type="checkbox"/>
spouse/partner	<input type="checkbox"/>
parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
children	<input type="checkbox"/>
other family	<input type="checkbox"/>
friend(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
depends on the programme and time of day	<input type="checkbox"/>

(briefly explain)

47. Which television programmes do you watch **regularly**? please list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

48. Are there any programmes which you **choose never** to watch? please list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SECTION H: GENERAL

49. Where are you most likely to get your information on films from?

(please tick all that apply)

adverts/trailers on video tape	<input type="checkbox"/>	
poster(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
friends/family	<input type="checkbox"/>	
television	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify which tv programmes)</i>
cable/satellite tv	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify which channels)</i>
radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify which station)</i>
newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please state which)</i>
magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please state which)</i>
other(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify)</i>

50. Which of the following offers you the widest choice in your taste of films?

(please tick one)

video shops	<input type="checkbox"/>	
the cinema	<input type="checkbox"/>	
British terrestrial television	<input type="checkbox"/>	
own/family video collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	
friend(s) video collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	
cable/satellite tv	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify channel(s))</i>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify)</i>

51. (a) Where do you **prefer** to watch films?

(please tick one)

at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	
someone else's home	<input type="checkbox"/>	
at the cinema	<input type="checkbox"/>	
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
		<i>(please specify)</i>

(b) Briefly outline the reasons for your preference:

52. (a) Please write the names of up to 5 films you have seen in the last six months and tick the box which indicates where you saw them:

(please tick one for each category)

		cable/ video	satellite tv	cinema	British tv
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(b) Who did you watch each of these films with?

(please tick all that apply)

	alone	spouse/ partner	children	other family	friends
Film 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

53. Please write the names of up to five of your all time favourite films and how many times you have seen them:

	title	number of times
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____

54. Please write the names of up to five actors/actresses who you particularly like:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

PLEASE USE THE SPACE BELOW TO WRITE DOWN ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD:

APPENDIX B

Community Organisations for Pilot Survey

Group A - a drop in centre for 14-25yr olds held in a youth club. Sessions are held every day of the week except Saturdays. All the activities are held in one room and include pool; chess; table top football and there is also a TV and video available. On Sundays a number of the users play for the same football team and tend to use the Sunday session as an after game social. Over 95% of the users are male most of whom are of Bengali background.

Group B - also a drop in centre for young people though the users are of a slightly older age range (18-30yrs) than Group A and reflect a more diverse ethnic make-up (Indian, Pakistani and Bengali being the main ethnic composition). The group is based in a centre that is used by a number of local groups throughout the week. Facilities include a gym (used mainly to play badminton); outdoor tennis courts and football pitch (these can only be used in the summer as there are no floodlights); a table tennis and pool room. A further two rooms are available for discussion based activities. There is only one session a week which is held on Sundays 5.30-9.30pm. Once again the majority of users are male.

Group C - runs one weekly session (Sundays 2-5.30pm) in the same venue as Group B and offers the same facilities and activities to its users, the only additional activity being a drama class. The group is aimed at families with the children mainly engaged in sports and play activities whilst the parents use the time to chat to each other and plan the occasional social / cultural event. The majority of families attending the group are of Bengali origin and the average age group of the children is 7-16yrs.

Group D - runs typing and word-processing courses aimed at the local South Asian population. The classes are held every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and are attended solely by women mainly of Indian, Pakistani and Bengali background. The average age group of the women is 18-35yrs. This group is part of a larger organisation which also offers courses related to Indian arts / culture.

Group E - has its own centre and functions primarily as a luncheon club. Although it is aimed and mainly used by middle-aged and elderly people of South Asian descent the luncheon club also attracts individuals from various employment / professional and ethnic backgrounds. Some older members of the South Asian population also use the centre for basic advice as well as a meeting place for a chat.

APPENDIX C

Revised Questionnaire

SOUTH ASIAN FILM / VIDEO AUDIENCES

ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a three year research project funded by Middlesex University and the British Film Institute.

The purpose of the research is to identify the ways in which people of South Asian descent make use of films on video tapes and to highlight any gaps and absences perceived by them. The kind of things we want to find out about South Asian audiences includes the type of films watched on video tape; the effects of cable and satellite television on the use of video tapes; where video tapes are obtained from and so on. The questionnaire is aimed at individuals aged 16 and above.

The questionnaire does not ask you to give your name and address and so **COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY IS GUARANTEED. Please be assured that the information in this questionnaire will be used solely for the research project and for no other purposes.**

COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When filling in the questionnaire it is important that you answer the questions as they apply to you, even though you may live with people whose choice and preferences of films may differ from yours.

Most of the questions require you to answer by ticking the appropriate box or boxes. Please read the small print in brackets which will tell you whether you are allowed to tick more than one box.

There are a few questions which require you to provide more detailed answers. You can answer these questions by writing in the space provided.

On completing the questionnaire return it to the organisation or group where you received it.

If you require further information or would like to be kept informed on the progress of this research then please write to:

Bilkis Malek
Middlesex University
White Hart Lane,
London
N17 8HR

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION.

SECTION A: VIEWING EQUIPMENT

1. (a) How many television sets do you have in your home?

(please tick one)

- none 1
one 2
two 3
three 4
four 5
more than four 6

- (b) How many video recorders do you have in your home?

(please tick one)

- none 1
one 2
two 3
three 4
four 5
more than four 6

- (c) How many cable boxes do you have in your home?

(please tick one)

- none 1
one 2
two 3
three 4
four 5
more than four 6

- (d) How many television sets are connected to a satellite receiver in your home?

(please tick one)

- none 1
one 2
two 3
three 4
four 5
more than four 6

2. Which of the following pieces of equipment do you have in your own bedroom?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

- | | Yes | No |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| television | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| video recorder | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| cable box | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| television connected to a satellite receiver | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| none of these | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |

SECTION B: FILMS & VIDEOTAPES

Part 1: Indian Films on Videotape

When filling in this questionnaire please feel free to consider both earlier and more recent Indian films eg. Pakeeza; Kagaaz Ke Phool; 1942 A Love Story; Mohra; Baazigar and so on.

3. Do you ever watch Indian films on video tape?

- Yes 1
No 2 (go to Question 15)

4. On **average** how often do you watch Indian films on videotape which have been rented and / or borrowed from:

(a) family or friends?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
- more than once a week 2
- once a week 3
- fortnightly 4
- once a month 5
- occasionally 6
- never 7

(b) public library with video section?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
- more than once a week 2
- once a week 3
- fortnightly 4
- once a month 5
- occasionally 6
- never 7

(c) video shops specialising in Indian films?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
- more than once a week 2
- once a week 3
- fortnightly 4
- once a month 5
- occasionally 6
- never 7

(d) mainstream video shops (eg. Blockbusters)?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
- more than once a week 2
- once a week 3
- fortnightly 4
- once a month 5
- occasionally 6
- never 7

(e) local shops (eg. grocers / newsagents)?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
- more than once a week 2
- once a week 3
- fortnightly 4
- once a month 5
- occasionally 6
- never 7

5. Are you generally satisfied with the **rental price** of Indian films on videotape?

(please tick one)

- Yes 1
- No 2

(briefly explain your dissatisfaction)

6. Are you generally satisfied with the picture and sound quality of Indian films on videotape?

Yes 1
No 2

(briefly explain your dissatisfaction)

7. (a) Do you ever buy Indian films on video tape?

Yes 1
No 2 (go to question 8)

(b) Where do you buy Indian films on video tape from?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
high street stores eg. Virgin Megastore, HMV, W H Smith	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
mainstream video shops eg. Blockbusters	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
local shops eg. grocers / newsagents	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
video shops specialising in Indian films	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

(please specify)

(c) Please give the titles of the Indian films on video tape you have bought in the last twelve months:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

8. (a) List the names of any actors/actresses (past or present) who you particularly like to see in Indian films (if there aren't any please write 'None'):

(b) List the names of any Indian film directors (past or present) whose films you particularly like to see (if there aren't any please write 'None'):

9. (a) Which of the following factors are most likely to influence you to actually watch an Indian film?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
dance	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
music	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
songs	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
special effects	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
themes/issues	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
storyline	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
actors / actresses	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
director(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

(please specify)

(b) Do you like to see any of the following in Indian films?

(please tick one box for each category)

	Yes	No	Don't Mind
violence	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
romance	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
comedy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
fighting	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
fantasy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>		

(please specify) _____

10. On **average** how many Indian films do you watch on videotape (bought and / or rented)?

(please tick one)

more than one a day	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
one a day	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
3 - 4 a week	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
one a week	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
2 - 3 a month	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 6 a year	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
less than this	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
never	8 <input type="checkbox"/>

11. Who are you **most likely** to watch Indian films on video tape with?

(please tick one)

on your own	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
spouse/partner	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
parents	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
children	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
other family	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
friend(s)	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
	(please specify) _____
depends on type of film	8 <input type="checkbox"/>
	(briefly explain) _____

12. Which days of the week are you **most likely** to watch Indian films on video tape?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
weekdays	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
no specific day	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

13. What time of day are you **most likely** to watch Indian films on video tape?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
morning (9am to 12pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
afternoon (12pm to 5pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
early evening (5pm to 8pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
evening (8pm to 11pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
after 11pm	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

14. (a) Do you **regularly** watch Indian films on video tape in places other than your own home?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
community centres	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
arts centres	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
library with video viewing facilities	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
friends / neighbours home	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

(please specify) _____

Part 2: Popular / Mainstream Films on Videotape

When filling in this questionnaire please feel free to consider both earlier and more recent popular / mainstream films eg. Terminator; Four Weddings And A Funeral; Gandhi; Bhaji On The Beach; Gone With The Wind; The Magnificent Seven and so on.

15. Do you ever watch popular / mainstream films on video tape?

- Yes 1
No 2 (go to Question 27)

16. On **average** how often do you watch popular / mainstream films on videotape which have been rented and / or borrowed from:

(a) family or friends?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
more than once a week 2
once a week 3
fortnightly 4
once a month 5
occasionally 6
never 7

(b) public library with video section?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
more than once a week 2
once a week 3
fortnightly 4
once a month 5
occasionally 6
never 7

(d) mainstream video shops (eg. Blockbusters)?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
more than once a week 2
once a week 3
fortnightly 4
once a month 5
occasionally 6
never 7

(e) local shops (eg. grocers / newsagents)?

(please tick one)

- every day 1
more than once a week 2
once a week 3
fortnightly 4
once a month 5
occasionally 6
never 7

17. Are you generally satisfied with the **rental price** of popular / mainstream films on videotape?

- Yes 1
No 2

_____ (briefly explain your dissatisfaction)

18. Are you generally satisfied with the picture and sound quality of popular / mainstream films on videotape?

Yes 1

No 2

(briefly explain your dissatisfaction)

19. (a) Do you ever buy popular / mainstream films on video tape?

Yes 1

No 2 (go to question 20)

(b) Where do you buy popular / mainstream films on video tape from?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

Yes No

high street stores
eg. Virgin Megastore, HMV, W H Smith 1 2

mainstream video shops
eg. Blockbusters 1 2

local shops
eg. grocers / newsagents 1 2

other(s) 1 _____
(please specify)

(c) Please give the titles of the popular / mainstream films on video tape you have bought in the last twelve months:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

20. (a) List the names of any actors / actresses (past or present) which you particularly like to see in popular / mainstream films (if there aren't any please write 'None'):

(b) List the names of any popular / mainstream film directors (past or present) whose films you particularly like to see (if there aren't any please write 'None'):

21. (a) Which of the following factors are most likely to influence your choice of popular / mainstream films?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

Yes No

dance 1 2

music 1 2

songs 1 2

special effects 1 2

themes/issues 1 2

storyline 1 2

actors / actresses 1 2

director(s) 1 2

other(s) 1

(please specify)

(b) What type of popular / mainstream films do you like to watch?

(please tick one box for each category)

	Yes	No	Don't Mind
horror	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
science fiction	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
romance	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
action	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
comedy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
true stories	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
musicals	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
western	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
thriller	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
fantasy	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
cartoon	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
martial arts	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>		

(please specify) _____

22. On **average** how many popular / mainstream films do you watch on videotape (bought and / or rented)?

(please tick one)

more than one a day	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
one a day	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
3- 4 a week	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
one a week	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
2-3 a month	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 6 a year	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
less than this	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
never	8 <input type="checkbox"/>

23. Who are you **most likely** to watch popular / mainstream films on video tape with?

(please tick one)

on your own	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
spouse/partner	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
parents	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
children	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
other family	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
friend(s)	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
depends on type of film	8 <input type="checkbox"/>

(please specify) _____

(briefly explain) _____

24. Which days of the week are you **most likely** to watch popular / mainstream films on video tape?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
weekdays	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
no specific day	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

25. What time of day are you **most likely** to watch popular / mainstream films on video tape?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
morning (9am to 12pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
afternoon (12pm to 5pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
early evening (5pm to 8pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
evening (8pm to 11pm)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
after 11pm	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

26. (a) Do you **regularly** watch popular / mainstream films on video tape in places other than your own home?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
community centres	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
arts centres	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
library with video viewing facilities	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
friends / neighbours home	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

_____ (please specify)

SECTION C: CABLE / SATELLITE TELEVISION

27. Does your household subscribe to cable and/or satellite television?

Yes 1

_____ (briefly outline the reasons for subscribing)

_____ (go to Question 28)

No 2

_____ (briefly outline the reasons for not subscribing)

_____ (go to Question 33)

28. How long has your household been subscribing to cable/satellite tv?

(please tick one)

less than 6 months	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
6 months - 1 year	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 2 years	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
2 - 3 years	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
3 - 4 years	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
more than 4 years	6 <input type="checkbox"/>

29. Which additional channels are purchased by your household?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
Sky Movies	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sky Movies Gold	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
The Movie Channel	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Home Video Channel	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
TV Asia	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

_____ (please specify)

30. Which channels do you use the **most**? List upto 4 starting with the most frequently viewed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

31. What kind of films do you watch on cable / satellite tv?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
Indian films	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
popular / mainstream films	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	

_____ (please specify)

32. How has cable / satellite tv affected your use of films on videotape?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

	Yes	No
I purchase fewer Indian films on video tape	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
I purchase fewer popular / mainstream films on video tape	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
I rent fewer Indian films on video tape	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
I rent fewer popular / mainstream films on video tape	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION D: GENERAL

33. Do you **regularly** watch films other than Indian or popular / mainstream films.

(please tick one box for each category)

	Yes	No
African	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
European	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Japanese	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Manga	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Art House	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
other(s)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>

(please specify) _____

34. Which of the following offers you the widest choice in your taste of films?

(please tick one)

video shops	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
the cinema	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
British terrestrial television (BBC, ITV, Ch.4)	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
own/family video collection	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
friend(s) video collection	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
cable/satellite tv	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
other	7 <input type="checkbox"/>

(please specify channel(s)) _____

(please specify) _____

35. (a) Where do you **prefer** to watch films?

(please tick one)

at home	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
someone else's home	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
at the cinema	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
other	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

(please specify) _____

(b) Briefly outline the reasons for your preference: _____

36. Please write the names of upto five of your all time favourite films and how many times you have seen them:

<u>title</u>	<u>number of times</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

37. Please write the names of upto five of your all time favourite actors/actresses (past or present):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SECTION E: PERSONAL DETAILS

38. Which age group do you belong to?

(please tick one)

- | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| 16 - 19 | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 - 24 | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25 - 29 | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30 - 34 | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35 - 39 | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40 - 44 | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45 - 49 | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 50 - 54 | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 55 - 59 | 9 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 60 - 64 | 10 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 65+ | 11 <input type="checkbox"/> |

39. Sex:

- | | |
|--------|----------------------------|
| male | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| female | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |

40. Marital Status:

(please tick one)

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| married | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| single | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| divorced | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| co-habiting | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| separated | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| widowed | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |

41. (a) Where were you born?

(please tick one)

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| England | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bangladesh | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| India | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pakistan | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sri Lanka | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| East Africa | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |

(please specify) _____

(please specify) _____

(b) Ethnic Group:

(please tick one)

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| Bangladeshi | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Indian | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pakistani | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sri Lankan | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |

(please specify) _____

42. Which languages do you speak fluently?

(please tick Yes or No for each category)

- | | Yes | No |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| English | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bengali | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urdu | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gujarati | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Punjabi | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hindi | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tamil | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | |

(please specify) _____

43. Religion: (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|-------|
| Hindu | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Muslim | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Sikh | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Buddhist | 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Christian | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| None | 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Other | 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
- (please specify)

44. What is your highest educational qualification? (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----|--------------------------|---|
| none | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 16+ | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | C.S.E. 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G.C.S.E. | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | O level 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A level | 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> | O.N.D. 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G.N.V.Q. | 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> | B.T.E.C. 8 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Degree (BA / BSc) | 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> | H.N.D. 10 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Higher Degree (MA / MSc/ PhD) 12 <input type="checkbox"/> |
- (please specify)

45. (a) What is your job status? (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|--------------------------|-------|
| employed full time | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| employed part time | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| self-employed | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| government training scheme | 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| unemployed | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| housewife/househusband | 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| full time student | 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| part time student | 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| retired | 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| other | 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
- (please specify)

- (b) What is your personal gross annual income (including benefits) before stoppages?

- (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|------------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| none | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| up to £5,000 | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| £5,000 - 14,999 | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| £15,000 - 24,999 | 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| £25,000 - 34,999 | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| £35,000 - 44,999 | 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| £45,000+ | 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

46. In which area do you live? _____
(please specify the borough and postcode only)

47. (a) What type of accommodation do you live in?

- (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------|
| house | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| flat | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| bedsit | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| hostel | 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| student residence on campus | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| other | 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
- (please specify)

- (b) Is your household:

- (please tick one)
- | | | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------------|-------|
| owner-occupied | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| rented | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| other | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
- (please specify)

(c) How long have you lived at your present address?

- (please tick one)
- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| less than 1 year | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1 - 5 years | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 - 10 years | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 - 15 years | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 - 20 years | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21 - 25 years | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| more than 25 years | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |

48. (a) How many people (including yourself) live in your household? _____
(please specify)

(b) Do you live with members of your family?

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | (go to (c)) |
| No | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | (go to (d)) |

(c) Who lives with you?

- (please tick all that apply)
- | | |
|----------------|--|
| spouse | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| mother | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| father | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| brother(s) | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| sister(s) | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| son(s) | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| daughter(s) | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| grandparent(s) | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| grandchildren | 9 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| other(s) | 10 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |

(d) If you do not live with members of your family, who do you live with?

- (please tick all that apply)
- | | |
|------------------|---|
| I live on my own | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| partner | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| students | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| professionals | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |
| other(s) | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> _____
(please specify how many) |

(e) What is the gross annual income (including benefits) of your household (approximate calculations are okay)?

- (please tick one)
- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| none | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| up to £5,000 | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £5,000 - 14,999 | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £15,000 - 24,999 | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £25,000 - 34,999 | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £35,000 - 44,999 | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| £45,000+ | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please use the space overleaf to write down any other comments you would like to add.

APPENDIX D

Graphical Illustrations of Survey Data

Figure 1: Area of residence

Valid cases: 293

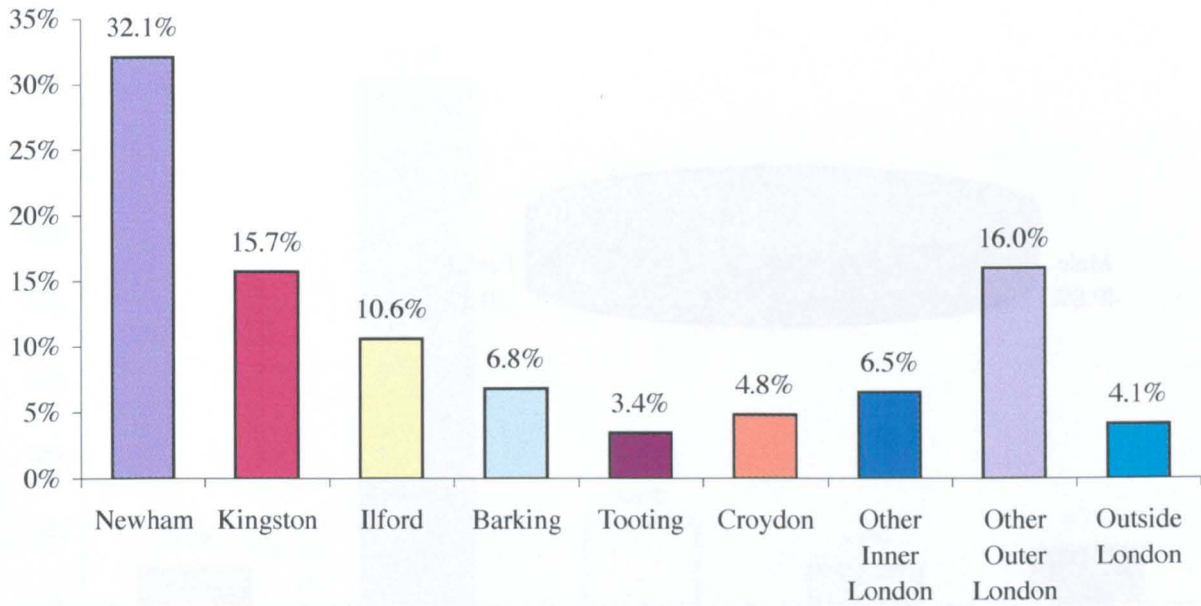


Figure 2: Proportion of responses from various groups

Valid cases: 316

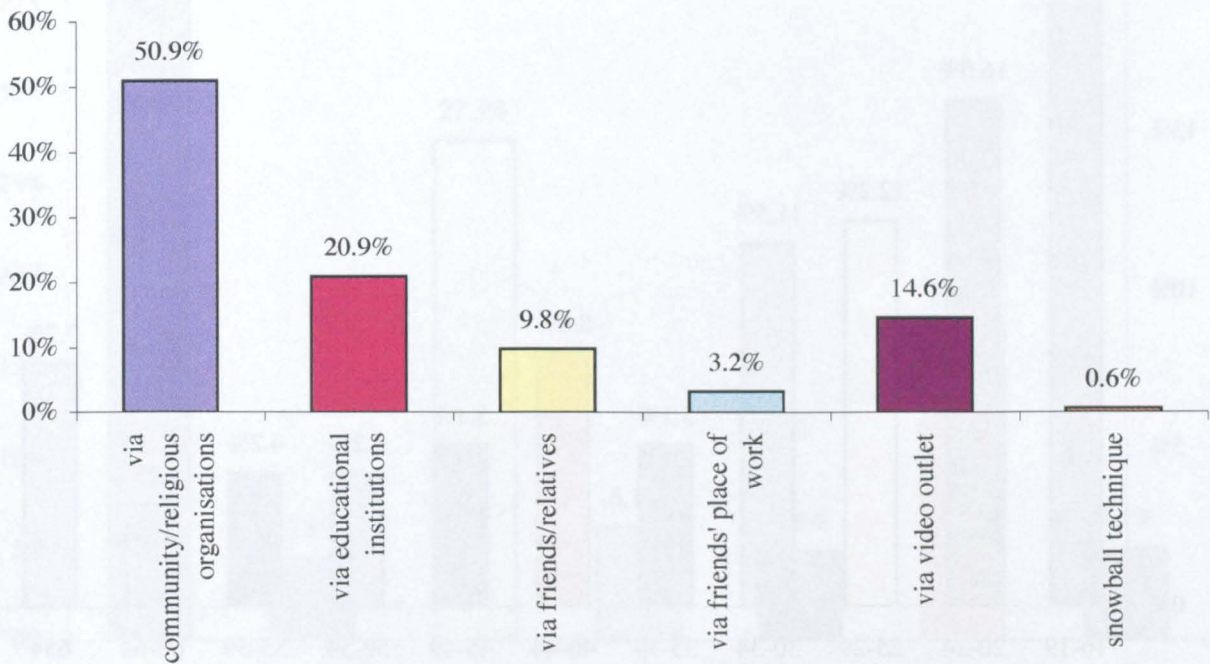


Figure 3: Sex Breakdown

Valid cases: 311

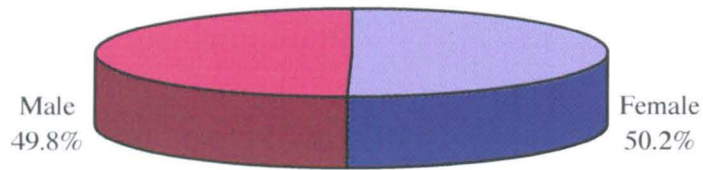


Figure 4: Age Breakdown

Valid cases: 312

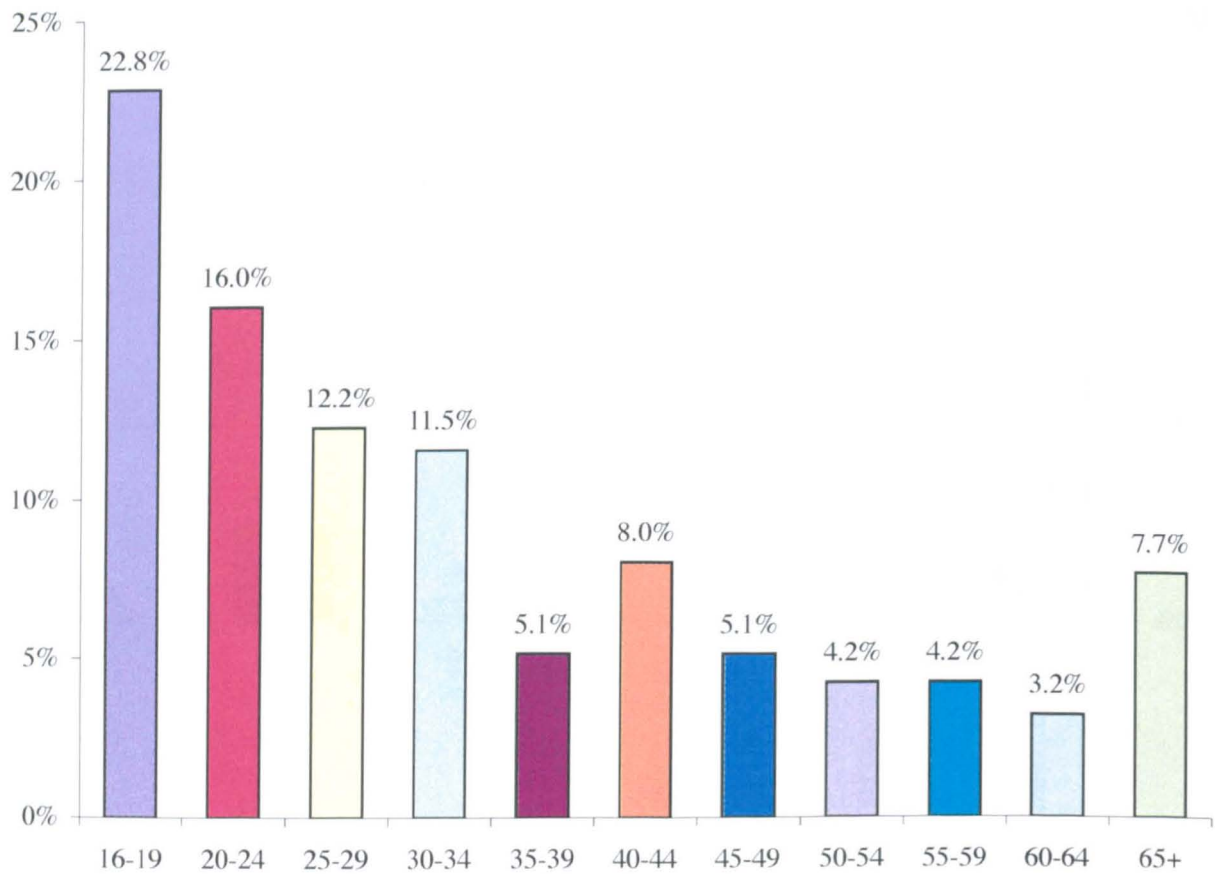


Figure 5: Ethnic Groups

Valid cases: 311

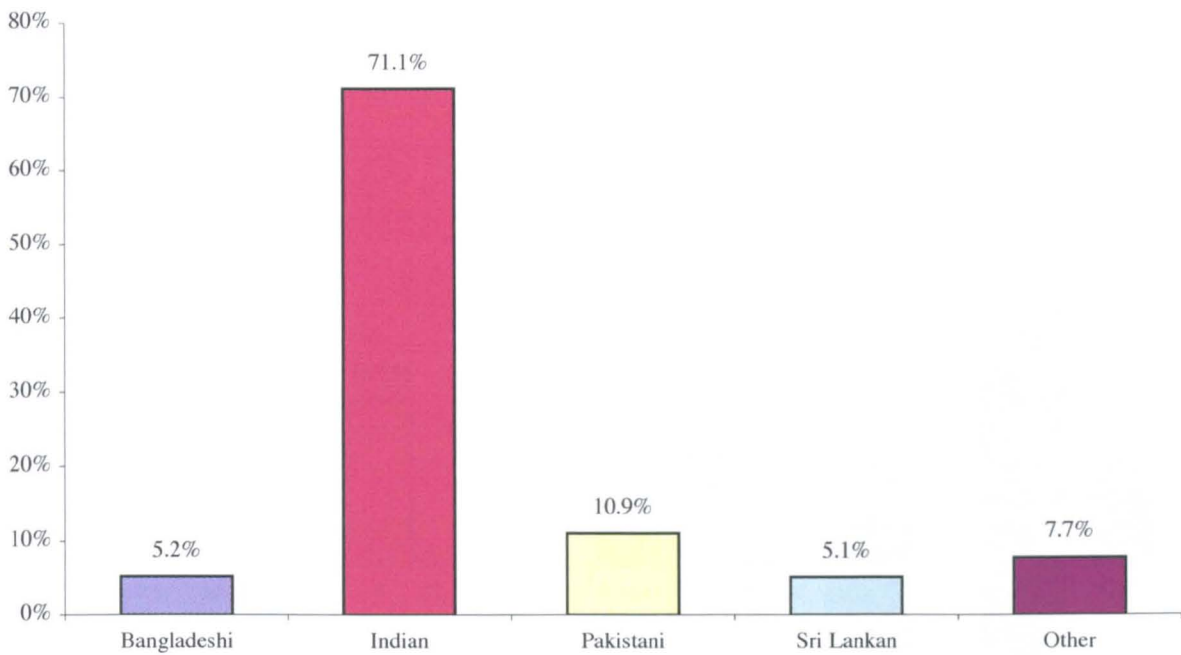


Figure 6: Place of Birth

Valid cases: 311

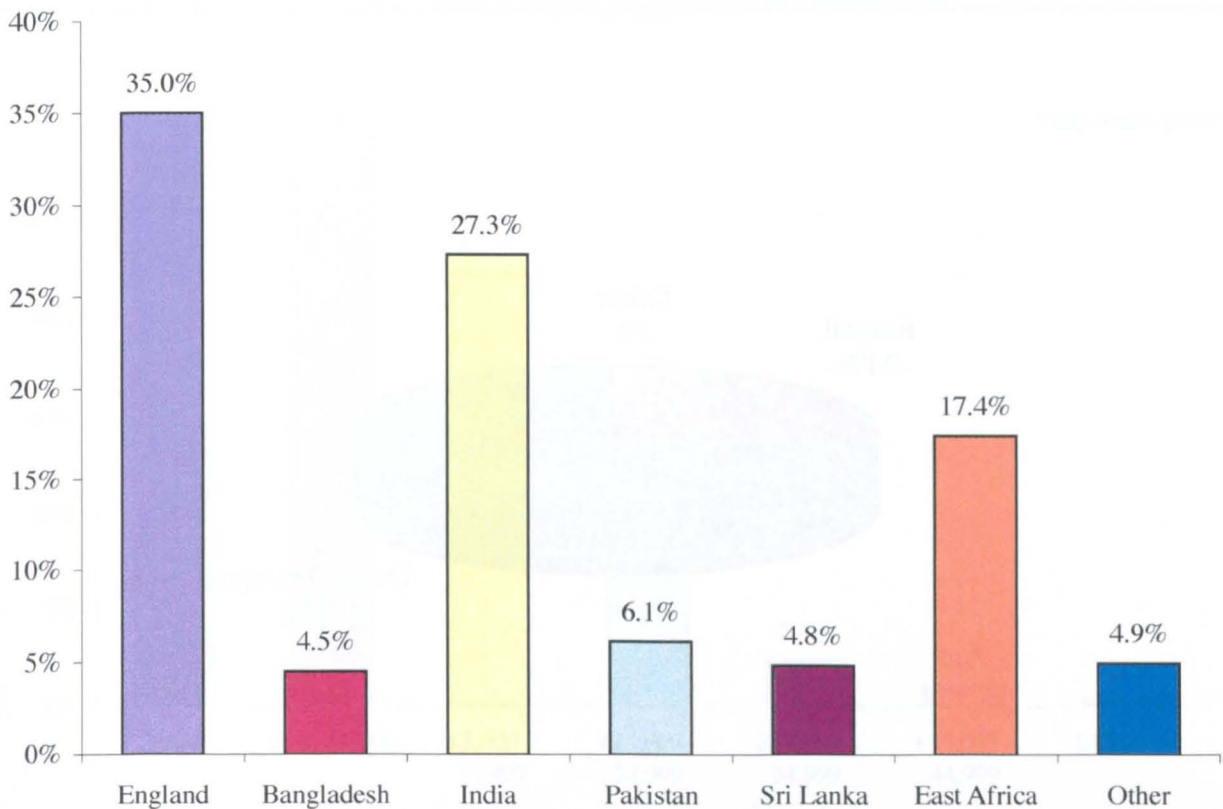


Figure 7: Religion

Valid cases: 311

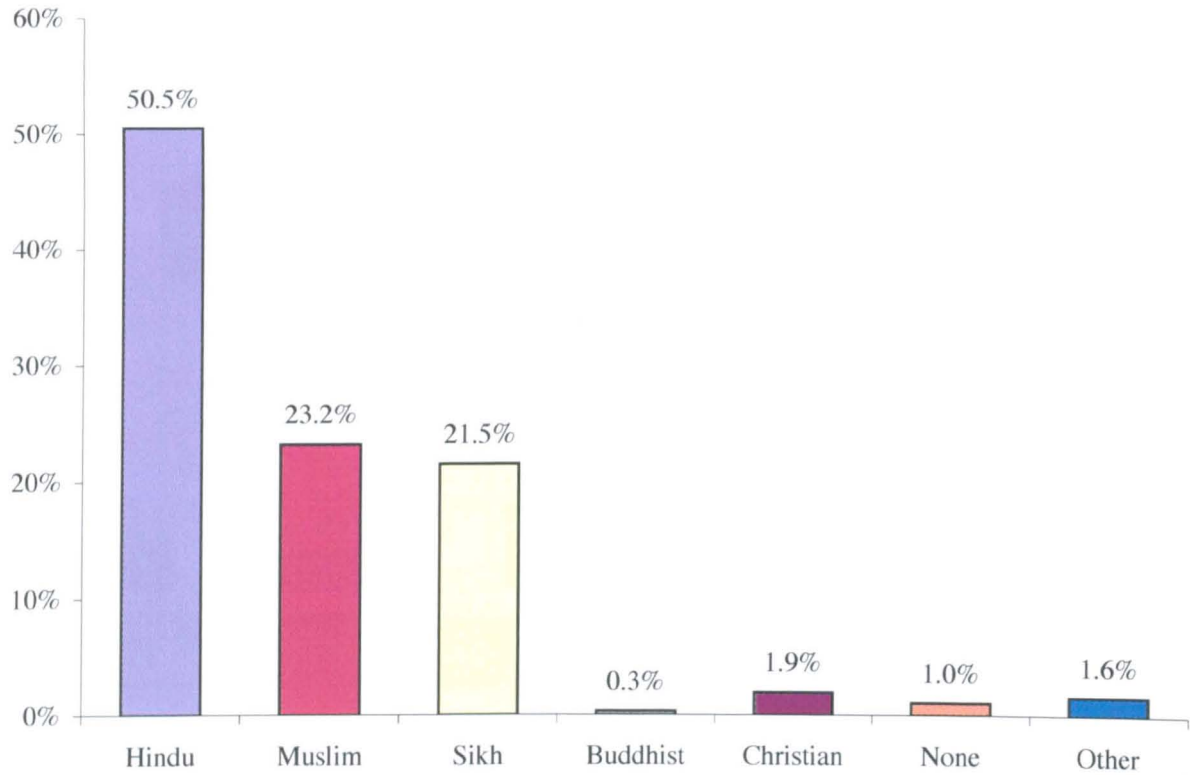


Figure 8: Accomodation Status

Valid cases: 208

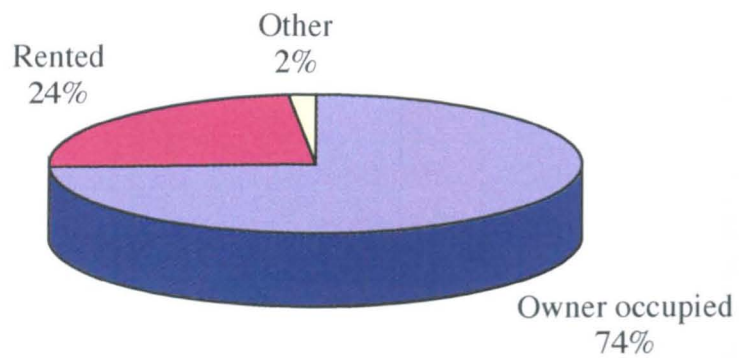


Figure 9: Household Structure

Valid cases: 308

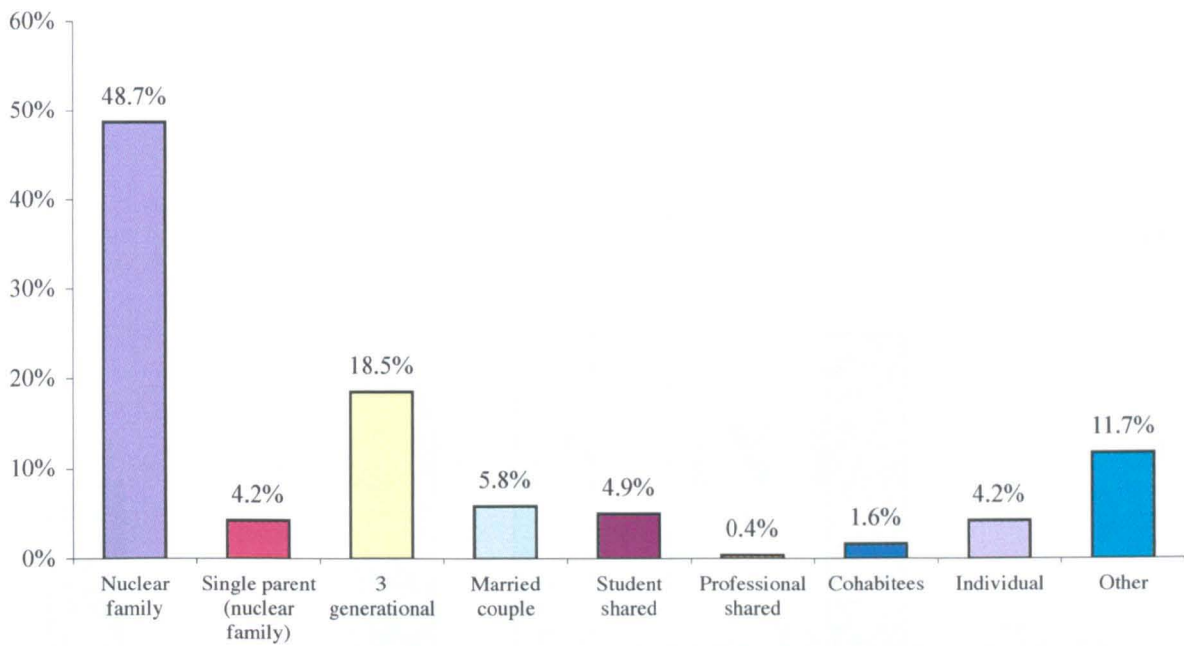


Figure 10: Personal gross annual income

Valid cases: 291



Figure 11: Household gross annual income

Valid cases: 229



APPENDIX E

Transcript of Group Discussion

Participant 1: I think it's important to have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the project. We need to make sure everyone is on the same page and knows what we're trying to achieve. It's also important to have a good communication plan in place so that we can stay updated on the progress and any changes that might come up.

Participant 2: I agree with you. I think it's also important to have a good team structure in place. We need to make sure everyone has a clear role to play and that we're all working together towards the same goal.

Participant 3: I think it's also important to have a good budget in place. We need to make sure we're not overspending and that we're getting the most out of our resources. It's also important to have a good risk management plan in place so that we can identify and mitigate any potential risks early on.

Date: 9th April 1997

Time: 2p.m. to 3.45p.m.

Venue: The Chapel, Middlesex University, Tottenham campus

Participants: I (Ishtiaq Hussain); J (Javed Iqbal); N (Noshin Ahmad); A (Ayesha Ahmad);
S (Shagufta Yaqub); M (Mustafa Mohammed),

Interviewer: B (Bilkis Malek)

The discussion began with each individual introducing themselves. A handout was then circulated to each respondent which listed five possible themes for discussion (see chapter 5 p201 in main text). The group was informed that it was not necessary to follow the themes on the handout but to use them as possible points for dialogue and that other themes could be discussed as respondents felt appropriate. At the end of these introductory points the respondents' permission was sought and obtained for tape recording the discussion.

B: Does anyone want to volunteer to start or should=

M: =I'll start if you want

B: Yeah sure=

M: = Just to get it going. Well I mean I'm a I'm a convert or a revert. You know when I said this to someone once, they said 'what you were a Muslim and then you went away from Islam and you came back', and I said no no no! [group laugh] I'm a convert and I come from err a British family. And Islam for me is life, its the way I live my life. I can't, I don't have a western perspective where I erm to hold. Err sociology, psychology, politics, business, as a Muslim and everyone probably knows this, its all as one.

B: How did you get introduced?=
[

M: =To Islam?

B: Yeah.

M: I went to err India and I went to find out about yoga as I was very much into Hinduism and I ended up living in Kashmir in a Muslim community with a Muslim family. That was my first erm introduction to Islam which is very err a bit different to say now which, it's fundamentalist. And I didn't become a Muslim for nearly two years. I converted in Scotland [laughs], of all places [laughs].

B: Why Scotland?

M: Err, I was working, I went there to go and work on a wolf sanctuary up there.

B: A wolf sanctuary?

M: Yeah, yeah. I did and I ended up doing what I always used to do, I used I used to sell arts arts graphics equipment and I ended up working for a company. And whilst I was there I went to the mosque. I went to the mosque and err I said that I know about Islam and he said to me 'Well why don't you become a Muslim'. I met with this most friendly person who invited me back to his house and it was from there.

- N:** With when you were in Kashmir like did you have any erm, like what was your sort of view of Islam?
- M:** I guess I probably very similar to the err ideas I get today. I mean I didn't have like err, I had no contempt for Islam. I was so naive to what Islam was, I didn't kind of see it as an Eastern religion and not say err you know culture or monotheistic religion, I was very naive.
- J:** When you became a Muslim why do you think that this was the religion for you?
- M:** Just because, you know I used to study a lot of magic. Before I got into religion I used to study magic. And I started looking at where these say forms of meditation came from and it would come down to Hinduism or Buddhism. Err, and you know so many people people would claim that it's magic and even today it is a great way of meditating today and workshops. But really they all come from religion. Just the fact that even when studying Hinduism it came back to the concept of one God, and even though there's may be what 32 deities they all still believe that you do achieve Moksha, or become Brahma, or are considered one, considered one entity. It's like err something that's just telling you you know that 'Oh you believe in one God'. So really the truth is like you know become blinded. And Islam is something where you can go, 'well why do you do this then?'. You know you really come in to grill some, you say 'well why do you do this then?' and they give you an answer. And they've got so many acceptable answers. You know it doesn't come down to things like people going 'oh well you just have to believe that'. Or, 'oh you know you just have to believe that bit'. You know, the most important bit 'you just have to believe that! [laughs]. You know you don't get any decent proof.
- N:** How did your erm family and friends react?
- M:** I I've had various different reactions. I mean a lot of my friends were like my friends were like changing their names to Passable, err you know they've all become very celtic orientated. And you know they err most of my friends organised parties and raves and things like that and err, so cause they knew me they knew that I was crying spiritually for something. And so many of them found it surprising that I took on Islam and this is when I started seeing popular err kind of views as to what Islam was about. People would start saying 'Oh aren't they really oppressive to women', or you know 'Aren't they those people that smash their heads and cause themselves to bleed'. And and so you know through this it kind of it helped my growth. People will always ask me. My mum just thought it was a fad and I think she's kind of changing her mind now. She thought it...
- N:** [That's parents really.
- M:** ...was a fad and I'd kind of grow out of it. And it went from having Ganesh and things like this cycle before and having jossticks and stuff, I donna know [M and N laugh]. So she quite happily kind of felt in that way.
- B:** And has she, have they your family accepted you as a Muslim?
- M:** They do, I mean like they make, they know that if they shout out, I mean I don't like, you know I have a wife and child and I live quite far away from my parents. But they know that if I go to their house and they shout out and they can't hear me, they know that I'm praying. You know its got to that stage. And they don't, you know now, my brother won't come in you know and try and put me off and go [laughs while mimicking brother with

sarcastic expression and waving of index finger] [M]. My mum took a picture once of me prostrating you know it was that kind of like, but yeah they are.

B: But your immediate family 'cause your wife's also converted to Islam hasn't she?

M: Yeah she erm she wasn't a Muslim. And she didn't come to it for more than a year after I'd been Muslim for a year and I didn't pressurise her into becoming Muslim. Erm she came to it herself. Obviously, you know I was studying Islam had pieces of paper on the floor where I was trying to learn [giggles] and I guess you know that affected her.

B: What about other people and their experience of Islam? Has it changed in any way or has it kind of remained the same?

N: Well like I was erm my parents are, we [referring to A] were born in Pakistan, we're sisters by the way=

M: Are you sisters? Ahh right.

N: [Yeah, and ummh, the thing is that my dad doesn't like we were never kind of forced into any sort of like 'Oh you have to do this' or 'You have to cover your hair' or 'You have to you know can't get it cut' or whatever. But I think that for me what happened is we moved to Saudi Arabia and because I wasn't going to school over there I'd got like lots of time on my hands. And just like you know erm hearing the prayer call and just watching like people walking to the prayer err to the mosque from all directions, you know it just really really stirred my curiosity. So I just started reading up and erm erm yeah just reading books on different things. And that's basically how I developed my interest. I mean like it wasn't anything that my parents said, 'You have to do this' or 'Don't do that'.

B: And this is while you were in Saudi?

N: [In Saudi yeah, in Jeddah.

A: And it's like like my reaction was completely the opposite. I mean before I went to Saudi I was a bit I was like really into mysticism, I was really into

N: [reincarnation and=

A: =Yeah and like I was looking into Buddhism and stuff like that. But fundamentally I would have defined myself as a humanist erm because I didn't necessarily believe in God but I didn't necessarily reject God. Ummh 'cause I remember like when I was about twelve thirteen I used to ask a lot of questions all the sort of like like fundamental questions about me being here. I never really got answers that satisfied me. And then like when we moved to Saudi and and seeing the way like women were treated and stuff and just seeing the way things were there I just really got turned off. And it was just like a question of well if there is a God and there is Islam then erm you know I don't wanna have anything to do with it.

N: Yeah that was a big part I was just like hang on something's not right. You know and like you know

A: [But whereas like Nosh sort of went out and found found out what Islam essentially was toward women I just took it at face value and I rejected it then and there.

N: Its like there's a religious police force and they go around with long sticks and if your if your face isn't covered or you know if there's a little bit of your hair showing they'll whack you one. It's just like you know you don't do that.

B: Really? Do they really do that?

N: Yeah, yeah they'll come up to you and and I remember what happened was I went to school there

J: Can I, sorry, can I just ask how long you were there for?

N: Well I was in Saudi for about 5 years altogether but two was in the Arbir and three years in Jeddah. But I'd been, we'd been in Bahrain for eight and a half years which is off the coast of Saudi.

M: Is there a big difference between say Bahrain and err

N: [nodding head] Ooh yeah yeaah.

A: Yeaah=

M: =That big!? [A and M laugh]

N: Bahrain, Bahrain is like this really really tiny island. And erm its there's a huge expatriate population there and you have like your nightclubs and your alcohol and everything going on.

A: And it's quite cosmopolitan.

N: Yeah it's very dynamic very cosmopolitan. Whereas Jeddah you have everything going on in Saudi but its just all underground=

A: =Yeah.

N: You've got your your drug culture you've got your alcohol you've got everything. It's just all underground. Anyway so erm, what was I saying?

B: You were talking about your different experiences that you reacted by

N: Oh yeah oh yeah

A: You see Nosh sort of started gaining a lot of knowledge about Islam she started going to circles and stuff and I was sort of got on to the drug culture and stuff like that. And also I think it had to do with the fact that I was at school and I was going to this ex-missionary school which you know no Saudi's were allowed, mainly overseas and Americans coming there. Whereas Nosh was sort of like

N: I went to this school for three months. What happened was the first day I actually went there I was in my tight jeans and hairspray in my hair and everything [group laugh]. And I went there and erm the first day I, what happens is the girls aren't, the erm playground's totally covered right. So, you've got your walls and then you've got this huge corrugated

stuff going up like that [describes shape of roof with hands] and erm you can't leave the campus unless your your, someone comes to the gate tells your name to the watchman he announces it over the mike and then you leave through this really tiny like passage thing. And so what happened was my driver came and my name was announced and as I'm leaving I get this whack [describes with hand] on the back. And I turned round and this woman goes and she goes 'Are you Muslim?', and I go 'Yes I am'. She goes 'Why isn't your hair covered where's your abayah?' you know the black thing you wear, and I'm just like, I go 'My God', I go 'Look I'm really sorry I didn't know it was part of the school regulations. There's no need for you to hit me'. You know and and I was like 'From tommorrow I'll wear one'.

M: How old were you then?

N: I was [to A] how old was I? Sixteen? yeah.

A: [Yeah sixteen.

N: But I remember when we went actually went to Jeddah we were so adamant we were just like, 'We hate it here, we're not going to like it, we can't like it'.

A: [in a comically pitched voice] There's no way that you're going to wear err make us wear er erm hijab!

N: Yeah and we weren't we were just like yeah come on

A: [Like the first time we got there it's really horrible 'cause everyones wearing one.

N: Yeah and you just stick out like a sore thumb. Anyway, if your if your with your wife and the these religious police they come up to you and they say 'Where's your marriage certificate?' If you don't have it on you your chucked into jail. It's like, just like that.

B: Really?

N: Yeah, honestly its ridiculous. And it's like if you don't carry your certificate around everywhere with you it's erm, I remember once erm I went to a compound to spend the night at my friends house. And when you go into the compound you have to leave your I.D. at the gate. And because they had my I.D. overnight they were just like 'What were you doing? Who were you with?', basically implying that I was you know. It's just really ridiculous and I was just like this isn't right and I've got to sort out you know sort out some answers.

B: So you started to kind of read about it?

N: Yeah and I went to circles to talk to other Muslim women.

B: [to Ayesha] Whereas actually you rejected it?

A: Yeah I distanced myself more.

B: But how did your parents, did your parents react in any way to your differing experiences?

A: Well I think my parents sort of like
[]

- N:** Ummh well Her sort of she covered it very very well. But at the same time they were just like
- A:** [My parents were really worried about me.
- N:** Yeah but erm they didn't know half the stuff that she got up to.
- A:** [They didn't know half the stuff that I got up to. But they were sort of concerned that my friends weren't Muslim. Erm particularly since my parents were sort of getting into religion themselves. And they were mixing with Muslims who sort of were saying that she needs to be like you know a better Muslim and blah blah blah. And erm I think as far as my political views were concerned my parents were like highly reactive you know I had, I was reading a lot of erm very liberal literature like on lesbianism and stuff like that. Erm but it was only when I came here that that they really did start worrying 'cause like I dyed my hair purple and I had like hundred thousand earrings and I dressed really hip and whatever but erm an and that was when they sort of like really started seriously being concerned about me. Erm and so when I did get into Islam and I felt like in retrospect I find that I found out quite recently that they weren't convinced that it would stick that it was just a fad. And erm even like my erm parents' friends would say like one of my mum and my dad's friends she was just like you know [laughs] 'What you doing?'
- N:** The hijab would come up
- A:** [The hijab would come up and
- J:** "Oh your up to something else and this is just a"
- A:** [Yeah oh yeah. yeah=
- N:** =Yeah.
- B:** Which was err a lot of women have the reaction they've had isn't it? like its really just a front to get out and have freedom
- N:** [Like it's for yeah yeah.
- A:** [Yeah. The thing is in Islam
- M:** [I think that's quite amazing. [to Ayesha] Sorry. I think that's amazing that you know my all through my life my teenage life I had this struggle and had my parents going "You shouldn't smoke you shouldn't do this.
- A:** [Yeah [laughs]
- M:** And infact now I think my mum would rather that I sat there and drank beer and smoked. She would feel more comfortable with that [group laugh] than me sitting there not drinking not smoking you know.
- A:** I mean initially I had I sort of had confidence in that respect because erm obviously like Islam sort of changed my whole lifestyle, yeah. And there were certain issues at home erm like collectively which we sort of had to come to a balance. And admittedly I had to look at

my own faults but I had to sort of compromise on a lot of issues where certain circumstances with my mum, circumstances in which Islam says no, maybe its just to make my life easier which doesn't justify it no way. Erm but I think that makes my parents life easier as well because when I would say cover my hair with family guests they'd say 'Oh but it doesn't matter you've known him for years' or 'it doesn't matter they're friends' or 'family' or whatever, you know. And maybe that's erm maybe that's to do with personal circumstance or whatever. But erm there was quite a lot of contention from my fathers side that erm the way I got into Islam was quite political. And I mean

B: [And your parents weren't? Their relationship with Islam wasn't political?

A: Well perhaps it was more political than he would erm than my dad would erm believe. Erm because for me I mean Islam I think he thought that Islam for me was quite a rash job because as is, as I said, for me it was just I mean once I was intellectually convinced that there was a God and intellectually convinced that the Qur'an was the word of God then that was it [clicks fingers] within a week I had the hijab on. I would not erm I didn't even know how to pray very well and I just started practising you know for me it was just like okay I'll just get along now I can gain knowledge as I go along. You know erm and I think that was quite shocking for my parents 'cause it was literally a case of one day she's a mixed kid and the next day she's all covered up you know. Erm and and I've always been quite political but erm. One of the reasons why I got this reaction was 'cause I'd just started a new semester and I was talking to like some other students and stuff. And there was this one guy and he was like the most ordinary Muslim person you've ever met the nicest person you've ever met who actually believed in fascism as the world's solutions. And that was like really shocking for me. And like erm and like we got into a debate once about, I, I for some reason for some emotional reason I was defending err saying 'Well no Islam has got all the solutions'. 'Cause you sort of like when you're growing up you sort of have this thing from people you know your parents or whoever telling you that 'Well no Islam is not just a religion it's a complete way of life'. And you sort of boast about it but you don't always understand it completely. So at that point that's what I was doing. And then I was just thinking hold on I haven't got a clue what I'm talking about you know I should find out more about it. And essentially it came down to a thing of erm well Allah's created me therefore he knows me better than anyone else. Therefore you know he's the one who knows which way to make the most of my life, there are certain things that I won't like which I have to do and there are certain things that I like that I can't do. And at the end of the day Allah knows best. And you know it was sort of like erm submitting myself to to that which wasn't really easy but

B: And now your parents, what's your parents' attitude towards your

A: Well I think my parent's attitude, I think, I think even after I'd been practising my parents had had reasons to like we, I've had quite a few contentions with my parents and they've had quite a few contentions with me. Erm and I don't blame them for seeing me the way they do. Erm but as far, I mean I think my dad thinks I'm a bit extreme in my in my views because you know I might support hamas or whatever yeah, my political view. Erm like I don't know if you saw the programme yesterday on Channel 4.

B: I've recorded it but I've read the Guardian article.

A: [Right, okay. Well I mean I can confirm that a lot of that was just not true because I remember discussing all of that with the producer. And erm you know I I knew those guys quite well in the sense that they followed us around everywhere and erm they came from one angle they projected us from another angle, can't expect anything less. But my parents don't necessarily, well my dad, when I

discussed it with my dad he doesn't necessarily believe that erm in al Muhajiroun he doesn't necessarily want so it seems to me to to like see a comprehensive view of what al Muhajiroun or what Omar Bakiri has to say. Erm also, I donna know I I don't like to impose Islam on my parents, on my life at home with if it concerns my parents and they don't they don't really subject to it. But erm that makes my life a bit difficult.

B: How about kind of your friends' responses, you know given that your parents' reaction?

N: All my friends have just been really supportive and the thing is that I have like erm, I have like gay friends and erm you know black friends and like a wide a wide a diverse group of friends and it's just kind of with me it's just and and vice versa its just a kind of like live and let live. You know whereas maybe other people wouldn't agree with that.

B: So you haven't really lost any friends?

N: Not at all, not at all. And sometimes the occasional like acquaintance would be like, like that I made after erm erm that I wore hijab would like go 'Yeah you're alright you know' it's like 'what am I not meant to be alright?' [group laughs]. You know what I mean. But I mean the thing is like I think initially like when I first started my post grad erm it was really horrible for me. Because I think people have so many preconceived ideas like I would bash them on the heads with the Qur'an and 'ray hey hey hey' do you know what I mean. And so people find it very very difficult, if I I had to like literally go up to people and start talking to them because no one would approach me=

B: =Really?

N: Yeah. Because they have so many preconceived ideas.

A: Yeah, that's just it I mean when I started SOAS erm you know you're in a lecture room of like 60 70 people and everyone would be talking to each other and no one wanted to know me 'cause I was like a little covered girl you know. But erm like it was after like a few weeks 'cause I was quite vocal in the lectures and that and erm like in like seminars aand stuff and erm you know they sort of saw that I'm not just a dumb Muslim woman or whatever. You know erm that I could speak that I was open to exchanging my views and stuff like that. So like erm, I think it was more like the men rather than the women who were open to talking to me. And erm I, as far as like my erm friends were concerned erm my friends were sort of part of part and parcel of the drug rave culture, you know erm whether it was like the Asian friends or the English friends or whatever. So to them like me covering up was a real taboo it was just like 'Okay we're not going to know you now'. But erm err=

M: =You might have been better off having a you know smoking marijuana [group laughs] and then they'd understand you

A: Yeh but so I'd pretty much had to like to start getting, I'd started hanging out with different people anyway because for me it was a thing of 'Okay well I'm I'm trying to be a practising Muslim now and I don't want to be associated with those people'. You know 'cause I'm trying to you know I'm trying to submit myself to something completely different.

N: Also there's that tension between culture and religion where you know culture says women can't cut their hair and you know blah blah blah and then you know because religion says

otherwise they think, they take religion for culture and you get that whole like and then if you tell them otherwise they don't like it.

A: Yeah yeh.

N: You know what I mean. Like you try and say 'Well I can cut my hair' you know and they say 'No but no you can't' and it's just.

A: Sometimes that's a problem within the families really as well.

B: Really?

A: Yeah.

N: Yeah.

S: I think that's what it was for me you know, as I grew up and I started like looking into it myself and found that well I can do this, you know. Yeah alright it might not be Pakistani culture or its not part of Asian culture but it's nothing to do with Islam. And you know if I speak up like that with my parents they go 'Oh you know you're going to college now [group laughs] and you don't respect us anymore' and I'm just like I'm just trying to prove a point you know.

B: That's an interesting point both of you have made about erm how people being surprised that you're so articulate in asserting your points about Islam. And in that article in the Guardian the guy [referring to the journalist Jon Ronson] actually says that 'one of the things that really surprised me is that the women that I met were the most articulate people in the group', you know that they could actually speak have these really erm kind of assertive kind of identities and stuff. Erm but I mean is that a gender thing do men not get that kind of reaction.

M: Yeah I think I mean I can only speak from personal you know erm, I've come here and I came here from a very kind of well to do area and then I came to London and I was in London for sometime and I didn't see another Muslim. But met Ish I think was probably one of the first Muslims I met and I'm like 'I'm a Muslim too', and Ish [referring to Ishtiaq] was like, 'Yeah I'm a Muslim', you know [group laughs]. I'm going 'Yeah come on lets' you know [I and M laugh]. Erm err and I and I think that you know as I saw erm women in the classrooms erm the Muslim women in the hijab, for me because I was so enthusiastic I didn't have any of these white middle class cultural rather than the religion they were the culture, and because they were Muslims, for me being a Muslim you know I was thinking you know whole of mankind instead of we shouldn't be splitting over you know cultures and things like this. So I'd go up to a Muslim woman, I'd go up to them and say 'Assalamoalaikum', to a Muslim a woman and she'd have to look round twice and you know just to check that I'd said 'Assalamoalaikum'. Not just because I was white but because she'd been sitting there all the time in these lessons for two weeks and no one had bothered to talk to her.

A: I think, I was just reading this book on the train erm but it it just seems that with Muslims and as with many people nowadays its just you know, the focus of their conscience and priorities in their identities seems to be first ethnicity yeah then race and then religion. I mean [holds up discussion handout drawing attention to title] you know Young British Muslims you know is should the focus be on the British or should it be on the Muslim because it's just like for me I'm just a Muslim in Britain. I'm not you know

- M:** Same for me I totally agree.
- A:** Yeah I mean if I moved to like say Gambia or like Russia or or like Pakistan I'm not going to be Pakistani Muslim or a Gambian Muslim I should just be a Muslim in Pakistan or a Muslim in Gambia or whatever. And I think
- N:** [Erm I just like I was just about to say you know like when especially if if your like second generation in England or whatever you have fragmented vision of home anyway right. But for me like when you asked me [referring to Bilkis] 'Are you from London?' I was just went 'Err I moved here three years ago', I didn't know what to say. 'Cause if someone asks me what I am you know I'll I'll say well originally I'm from Pakistan and I do realise what an emotional and cultural investment I have in the place. But for me I'm not really anything. I really really just see myself as a Muslim more than say Pakistani or=
- J:** =It's like even Islam says that you shouldn't be nationalist.
- B:** But does being in Britain kind of have erm an impact on the way that you erm the reactions you get for being a Muslim is that kind of a different experience from being in another country? You know like you were describing earlier
- N:** [Yeah I think it is culture like culture specific. Like for example, like me being err acting the way, or behaving the way and practising the way way that I do here would be totally different than in Pakistan. I think like you know the reactions that erm that you get maybe just like you know it's usually you know from like the dominant that your that your living in. So I think that if you were say in Pakistan it'd be different. I think that is culture like culture specific.
- A:** I think it's really funny because like erm over here like you tend to look at things in kind of like states of humanist and liberalist you know and like over here as a practising Muslim I have to watch for things like oh you should say this or you should say like buy this or buy that blah blah blah. Whereas out say for instance in Pakistan yeah they would probably see us as being really liberal even though we may be more Islamic in practise than them. Because of different cultures. You see like
- N:** [Yeah. Yeah like when we go, my aunt's just like 'You really come home in seven in the night?' And I'm like, 'Yeah'. 'You really go to University?', 'Yeah'. Like they just think I'm like this mod con woman like goes round doing whatever she wants and really independent.
- A:** And it's like, it's divisions of like it's divisions of Muslims right that you get from stereotypes of the shackled Muslim woman you know blah blah blah. But in essence you have to define you have to judge Islam, you can't judge Islam by Muslims you have to judge Muslims by Islam. And they're two separate things.
- M:** Yeah.
- A:** You see Islam is a separate entity to the Muslims rather than say for instance in other religions you know like for instance the church yeah. The institution of the church acknowledges that Christianity goes through paradigm changes and that all of those can like thats an accepted thing in defining Christianity right. But you can't apply that to Islam

because Islam defines itself. And erm you know I I don't blame the West or the East or the world or whatever to have these stereotypes right because in essence all stereotypes have got a basis. I mean like what Nosh was talking about what happens in Saudi Arabia. You know and you've got books coming out like Death of a Princess and ummh this is the

document that tells you what Muslim woman life is all about you know

M: [Yeah, I had erm I had a girl turn round to me once and she said 'What about this book?' [mimicks holding book up and waving it in an imposing way], you know 'What about this?' you know [group laughs] 'I read it I read it'. And it turned out that it was nothing.

A: [Oh the most authoritative book on Islam, [laughs], isn't it?

M: You know I said I couldn't understand.

N: [You know this one woman speaks out for all the women of Arabia let's like homogenise and essentialise and all the rest of it.

B: How about you two guys [to Ishtiaq and Javed] like your experience of Islam, has it changed in any way?

J: The way it is for me is that I'm not so much you know don't practise so much as I could you know I might go to jumma namaz but I mean I don't do as much as I should do or I could. Erm like I mean going back to what you said earlier, the way it was with our parents is that I see their response as culture and only like it's Pakistani culture. Like my brother who is younger than me he's come into Islam and before my parents were like 'Yeah' [in a dismissive tone] and whatever. Then he started learning about things that they'd taken as given, 'cause to be honest like my parents I wouldn't say they are as religiously minded as they could be. It's it's like with me erm I only really know what I was brought up with. I don't I haven't really sort out, keep the knowledge and that so like they know like they'd say to my brother, 'Oh well you can't do that like its gunnah' or whatever and my brother'd say, 'Where does it say that, that's a controversial issue'. Recently he's said that and this in response to something and they're like 'Oh, okay'. And like they won't even like they won't even like to those sort of matters they won't discuss it with him. So like I think its I mean what I know, the age especially we are, sort of my age generation and my family roots come from are more culturally bound than anything else.

A: I think particularly with Pakistanis because like its an issue of 'Oh Pakistanis established erm you know the properly Islam' and you know that whole thing. And Islam is sort of part of nationalism in Pakistan rather than you know a way of guiding your life.

M: I think that's a really major major factor is nationalism=

J: =Yeah, yeah you see what it is like erm on Eid you're just stood outside the mosque or whatever and everyone, like waving the Pakistani flag and saying Allah-u-Akbar out loud it's like they're waving a nationalist symbol yeah and saying Allah-u-Akbar. I mean it's like I donna know a lot of people seem to like=

M: =That's something that I'm gradually becoming used to. Like I went once to this mosque and it was great because there were lots of different nationalities there. The more and more

I went there the more I kind of realised that the the people were say that I met were mainly Pakistanis. And then further and further down the line as I checked out there seemed to be this continuous like erm and then along would come sort of a load of Arabs who'd say and then they'd say 'Well look hang on a minute you know your dominating this and this is a lot of nationalist, nationalism going on' and it starts affecting you know let's say you know when Eid is lets say you know.

N: [Yeah, like five different days.

M: [I was in Scotland for Eid. And in Scotland they celebrated Eid err when they sighted the moon and that decides whether they're gonna do it on the 30th day, you know say if the moon is not sighted on the 29th then we have to do it after the 30th because there are only 30 days in a lunar month. I found I phoned up down South and they'd and they'd taken I was told they'd taken their information from Saudi Arabia. Which I was told was really which was really dodgy because

N: [Oh yeah.

A: [Oh my God yeah, 'cause Saudi Arabia a few days ahead had said that we're going to celebrate on that day anyway.

M: Yeah

N: [This was a huge bone of contention in our house this Eid. We were just like 'we're...

A: [Yeah 'cause Nosh and I

N: ...not, we're not gonna erm celebrate Eid until someone actually sees the sees the moon. We're not going to go by calculation'. And my parents were just like 'Well the whole family's going to do it and your not going to do it', and blah blah blah and, 'how can you do this', and 'just do it'. And like we were just like 'No', and we're just like

A: [It's just like completely missing the point like we could be missing a day of fasting you know.

N: And we're just like, 'Well hey if you wanna do it we're not stopping you, we're just saying that we don't wanna do it'.

M: I think that's what erm you know national nationalism you know people say 'Oh well it's from Saudi Arabia you know it must be true'.

N: Yeah.

A: Yeah. At the end of the day we're all Muslims and you know the questioning of all of us should be there whether its, I mean the problem with nationalism you've got it in so many places. Like in Pakistan there's a nationalism, there's Turkish nationalism...

N: [Exactly that's exactly true.

A: ... the prophet was an Arab you know Mecca and Medina they're in Arabia, so there's all these different like nationalisms and like that's such a cause of fragmentation amongst Muslims themselves. You know I mean like there's so much fragmentation as it is like erm you know practising, like there's this, I don't know where this comes from but there's this really erm err powerful err phantom relationship a negative relationship between practising

and non practising Muslims. You know, I mean Javed sitting here saying you know he prays on Jumma but I don't you know that shouldn't that shouldn't make a difference.

N: [That's between him and you know.

A: [Yeah that's between him and Allah. At the end of the day he's still a Muslim and I still have the same affection for him as I do to say Mustafa who is a practising Muslim. It shouldn't make a difference. You know and that is something that is so harped on about you know and that is something that causes divisions.

M: People always ask me this and they say, 'Well are you a practising Muslim?', and the fact is I mean someone told me early on to me and said, 'Really there's no such thing as a practising muslim and a non practising Muslim'. Because alright okay I might pray six times a day yeah and do as much, as much as I can. And someone might do more than me and someone might do less than me. For me it doesn't make them any less of a Muslim.

N: [Yeah, exactly.

M: [Exactly.

A: It's like when you [referring to B] said to me on the phone yesterday 'I'm a non practising Muslim', I wanted to say 'Bilkis that doesn't matter to me'.

B: But you see that's the that's the kind of again cultural thing. I think it's that it's like your brought up to constantly define precisely how you relate yourself to certain things. You know it's kind of when people say, 'Well that's a Muslim name', and there's a whole kind of connotations related to that but it is

N: [I don't have a Muslim name. Erm, my name's not Muslim and when people find out they're just like 'Oh my God' blah blah blah. [M laughs]

B: Noshin isn't a Muslim name?

A: It's Persian.

B: Oh right so Noshin isn't Muslim.

N: No it's not. But then its funny 'cause then people go to the total other extreme where they erm [to A in a slightly lowered tone] you know like Nadia eating out of erm clay erm plates. [to the whole group] Like our erm like you know we have this cousin and she'll she'll eat out of mud erm clay plates. She goes 'Because the prophet did so we can't err we should like we have to'. And it's just like okay well that's that's good but like you know.

A: The thing is that there are certain things that are like so many you know that apply to the prophet. The prophet like he didn't like to eat rabbit. Doesn't mean it's haram for us to eat rabbit. He didn't like onions doesn't mean its haram or even naqlee it's like for us it's just an issue of well if you want to eat it you can but there's no sin or reward related to that.

N: Yeah it's just like you can like okay you know there's nothing to say that you can't have your own culture providing that it doesn't go against Islam. And I think people sometimes get that mixed up.

A: [Also, yeah. But there's also the thing of people talk as if in culture people talk of halal

things as haram when they might just be

N: [They keep you know erm making halal things haram
and haram things halal.

M: I've always wanted to ask Ish the question about about like err you know you were born in England you know and err you were you don't kind of say wear Pakistani clothes or your family clothes, you wear English clothes. And I would have thought you know I wondered how you thought about sunna and things, like you know sunna and if the prophet liked modern shirts. And I mean I always I you see I don't have any concept at all of what it's like to be say second generation or in a Pakistani family anything I don't come from one. So I don't you know I'm just interested in what you think.

I: When I was young my dad sent me to mosque and its like you know the molwees like you know what they're like...,

N: [Yeah

S: [Oh yeah

A: [Oh yeah

B: [Oh yeah

J: [Yeah

[group laughs]

I: ...and I used to like start skiving off from mosque and I'd go somewhere else with my friends. Once my dad caught me he said 'Alright, how you doing?' [facial sarcasm indicates that a more scornful / confrontational affair resulted] [group laughs]. And I think its like I think we were like about seventeen and they took bets with my sister how old she was, young pretty and single [group laughs]. And I was going like 'Yeah right yeah right yeah'. But I was really into music then and all that kind of stuff and erm I come to University. I don't really like talking too much about the past, but anyway, I come to University at Middlesex and I met a brother I think he was a Hizb-ut-Tahrir and he showed me this flag like you know the black flag and he said this and this and this erm you know it's an Islamic flag and he explained to me what it was. Anyway, so once I put that on my door I got all these people knocking on my door saying 'Oh are you one of those Muslims that hates the Jews' [group reacts with tutting and shaking of heads] and 'Oh are you one of them Muslims that wants to kill all the Hindus' and I'm like 'What?!' you know. And err you know heard all these people and their funny ideas.

B: Absolutely, and I think the interesting thing that some of you have just pointed out is that reward thing and as Javed mentioned about gunnah and also about how certain behaviour or actions get linked to being err haram or halal. 'Cause I think I'd had that and a lot of my generation whose introduction to the mosque was kind of linked to the reward thing like 'Just think of all the good things that will happen to you when you grow up'. And it's kind of err that cultural thing as well.

M: Is that how they treat erm I mean I've got a daughter and insallah she'll become a Musiim and I'll teach her Islam but do you think that you know that's the way that you know if you grow up in Islam do you think that's how your taught and let's say 'if you don't do this then bad things will happen to you' and 'You do this God will reward you?' Do you think

N: [I think that there should be a balance. Because so many kids are like you know are they're like erm erm you know 'You'll you'll have 60 years of hell if you don't do this and that'. And they get so scared, they're just like 'Okay, okay'. You know they're they're up there but that's not the right way. I think like you have to explain and give them a balance of you know both sides.

A: I think like with children ultimately you have to be patient you know you can't smack them into it. And it's just like maybe before teaching them about erm getting rewards for this and this, maybe it's just like maybe you just have to teach them fundamentally what Islam is and you know things like erm maybe a doctrinal perspective you know erm.

N: And one thing that I like about Islam is that erm you know you're supposed to give a...

A: [You see we've got we've got

N: ...child as much respect as we're supposed to give a grown up. And the thing is that sometimes grown ups don't realise but children need reasons as well. You know if you say to a child 'Don't touch that glass, don't touch that glass!', they'll keep on touching it. But if you say 'don't touch that glass because you could break it and hurt yourself' you know then maybe they'll listen to you.

M: I was just err I was reading this book [holds book up] and it's you know on the methodology of the call to Islam and it's about you know I think it comes into this thing that the you know the ways that you teach Islam is very important. You know and it keeps kind of saying that you know you can you can say to people, you know might have some dower group asking you know telling Muslims they should do this and they shouldn't be drinking, they shouldn't be smoking, they shouldn't be wearing this and der de der de der de der, lets say. But what they're not doing is like say getting down to the fundamentals of you know the talib and things like this you know. And really it's kind of futile you know in dealing with this

N: [Yeah.

J: [You see that's what, I mean like you know when I was younger I suppose I I I had blind faith. I'd go to mosque and if I didn't get it right my sabaq like I'd get battered=

B: =I did as well.

J: Yeah, I mean like to be honest I didn't learn because I had so much God fear in me I was more molweesaab fear and like I'd be sick and be and like what a person to talk to, you know if you want to know about Islam. And like as I got older I mean like he was the person like if you wanted to know more you should be able to ask. I was that scared of him you know. And some of the things he did to me like he'd hit me across the head, he'd make me sit in front of the heater, and like bruised my back and burn like the heater like

burned my back. I was sore as hell like and at that stage you if wanna learn about something that's not the right way to be taught.

N: And there's that hadith that says, don't hit the child on their head.

J: Yeah, and like err and I said to my mum once like, 'How come you send us there like they smack us and do this and do that to us and even you don't do things like that'. And my mum once said that, 'Wherever they hit like fire can't touch you', or something like that. So I mean I donna know I mean this is like things and like like sometimes they'd make me clean up and again they say like 'You get more sawab and you get more naykee for it'.

N: It's like they they justify it.

J: Yeah.

M: And the Qur'an talks about coming to people gently you know bringing Islam to people gently not in err say you know

N: [Yeah exactly.

B: The mosque I used to go to, I have to tell you this story 'cause erm, I don't know how yours [referring to J] was organised but we had lots of little classrooms and we all had to sit like with our knees bended for like two hours.

J: [Yeah, yeah.

B: And erm just like these you know there were these benches and it was just like you know the gymn benches, they were exactly like that but made kind of knocked together by ...

N: [Yeah.

B: ...people. And what the molweesaab used to do was to come round and if you got anything wrong he'd have the stick ready and he'd just whack you one on the knees.

N: Ooooh!

B: And what you [referring to Javed] were saying earlier about erm the heater and you know erm that kind of physical abuse, there was one guy whose arm was broken and there was police in and out of that mosque on a few occasions. And I think it's interesting listening to some of your [referring to M, N and A] experiences of how you've come erm how you've in a sense introduced yourself and learnt about Islam and kind of that you've not just accepted things that to you have not made sense. And I think that's something a kind of important message for people to hear. 'Cause you know people will like you [referring to N] said, people will look at you and think 'oh yeah, you know, you're going to shove this thing down my throat and expect me to accept it'. And it's I just think that a lot of kind of really a lot of kind of good points are coming out.

N: Oh in Islam it says there's no compulsion in religion. You can't have faith through force. You know what I mean and it's you can't have like you can't have Islam by forcing someone. If they don't have the faith then they're not going to believe in it. So you know, I went to a talk once and erm erm there was this there was erm there was a guy talking and there was a translation of it in Urdu. And the man who was speaking in Urdu he had the most beautiful voice and he was speaking so politely and and nicely. And my urdu is really bad. But the guy who was speaking in English he was screaming and pointing his finger

and “you don’t do this and that and that” and he was he just went mental. And rather than listen to I completely switched off. And I just listened to the translation then which ‘cause he said it you know the way it like it, the way you propagate Islam has like so much to do with people listening. People don’t listen if you shove it down their throat.

M: That’s like when you know you are or when I was a kid if I was really told off and told not to do things I’d do the total opposite. You know that kind of continual thing you know I’ve had all of my most of my life. I mean hopefully insallah I’ll teach Islam to my daughter and I’ll teach her Islam but you know their’s no compulsion to religion. And I think in a lot of cases a lot of people I know have been forced Islam you know from when they were a kid until they get to the age of sixteen they’ve been to the mosque every whenever every Friday, they’ve learnt Qur’an and the they’re off. They don’t they just leave it it’s like part of their childhood. And then maybe later on, ‘Yeah maybe I’ll check out this’, and they remember bits from when they were kids and then they start really learning ‘cause they they’re looking at it from

I: [I think everyone thinks about it some time or another like all their lives about God and everything. I remember once going to a gig standing there and just watching everyone, I was thinking what’s going through their minds you know its like do they care . Just started looking at them and thinking and got me thinking as well you know people about this thing =

A: =I think I mean the thing with children is that erm you know for instance I remember when me and Nosh that when we studied or started reciting the Qur’an we used to go home and say [in childish voice] ‘What is the point of reading this we don’t even understand what we’re saying’.

N: [Yeah, ‘We don’t even understand what we’re saying’. [group laughs]

A: And that was like highly controversial.

N: [Yeah like, ‘How can you say that’.

A: You know and and I think that there’s certain=

I: =[to A] Is your parents practising Muslim?

A: I think they were more practising in Saudi than they are here.

N: Yeah.

A: I think I mean one thing that my dad regularly says to me is that he’s got the faith and he knows he does a lot of things that he shouldn’t do and he knows that his life isn’t Islamic but for him he’s too much influenced by the environment that he’s in .

M: I think it’d be great if we all went into Islam and didn’t treat take anything else seriously or remained uninfluenced by things around us you know. [

N: [I that’s definitely, I think with my parents that I think they know what Islam is but it’s just it comes down to this thing of weakness. Yeah because my dads quite knowledgeable and like erm you know he can recite he he knows a lot of things off by heart in Arabic and English ‘cause he studied

Arabic so that he could erm he could read and understand it. But it's just your weaknesses really.

I: [to N and A] Since you've been covering up yeah, do they ever say to you 'Oh are you getting married?'

N: Yeah, ahh well the thing is I started covering in Jeddah but I didn't cover properly, I just wore the scarf around my head. And because my mum wasn't, one day we went to err a dinner party, it was segregated and a woman actually said there she goes that 'O dek', erm I was just going to say it in Urdu, 'The girls covered up and her mothers not'. And that really upset my mum in the beginning but then then I think it was just that and then like she just kind of got into it herself and just started herself.

I: 'Cause like when my sister covered most people were like 'No one's going to marry you'.

A: I think inevitably you're going to get a lot of pressure and a lot of prejudice erm but at the same time your gonna get a lot of people respecting you as well.

N: Yeah.

A: And I think one thing that my dad says that to me is that erm once I did start practis I I wasn't getting any proposals and he wasn't getting any proposals for me then after I did start covering up and my dad just sort of worried that is it you know is it all=

I: =What about your cousins and that you know did they start

A: [They haven't actually met with us since we started covering.

N: [But they've seen photographs and they've they've apparently they're they say they're happy to my parents but then you'd never really know do you? Because the thing is that I think that when when when you're covered and people think they should be covered but they're not it brings out the guilt factor. And I think and I think that sometimes brings up some tension.

A: I think also like I think in different places the symbol of the hijab is quite different. You know for instance for me the hijab isn't a symbol of modesty or whatever. It's a symbol that I wear hijab because I'm Muslim and I follow of Islam you know be it a political thing or whatever, you know it's complete submission for me. Whereas in Pakistan it's like err erm a respectable thing. So we've got one cousin who lives there and he when I put when I wore the hijab he thought it was good but then everything became focused around it. He used to sort of like shun me for it sometimes 'Oh it doesn't matter if you you know if he looks at you' or whatever and you know stuff like that. So I think

J: [Yeah I think yeah, [to A] sorry. I think that's for me I think it's so true. Like in terms of actual like you know parents and like they say yeah you should be more religious and you should be this and you should be like that. And that's they've got certain conceptions of how they think we should be religious. And it's like my brother like he's like 18 and like he observes Islam and practices as much as he can. But I'm sure there's times when my parents wish they could switch him off I really really do. 'Cause like before they were like sort of would hassle him but then then like when he would observe certain issues and he's and and the like they they won't feel happy about it I think I can see it. And like they and then that's

when they think "Oh no right we can't push them", and I've noticed since like he's become more sort of more religiously minded my parents won't like hassle us like so much. [group snigger expectantly]

B: right. [Oh

S: I think they want you to be religious but through Pakistani kind of culture.

J: [Yeah definitely.

A: [Yeah.

N: [Yeah.

S: When I was younger when people used to come round my mum used to give me like a dupppatta just a thin piece of cloth [A laughs] and which you could see through and she'd be like 'Wear this when people come round'. But if I was to actually put on a proper thing she'd she would have freaked out, she'd be like 'What you doing?' [M laughs]. You see you're supposed to be Pakistani you know like=

J: =Yeah and even though wearing the proper thing would be more right than just wearing something that's

S: [Yeah, even if I was to do it now she'd be like 'What you doing?' [group laughs] She would be like that you know. You know 'Why can't you be normal?'

N: I was err

B: [Just kind of, [to N] sorry you were going to say?

N: Ahh no I was just about to say that err a couple of weeks ago we had guests and erm there was one well we hadn't seen them since for like ten years and she walks in, she comes in sits down and we all sit down and she goes to Ayesha

A: [No the first thing she says, the first thing she says to Nosh, 'You look so ddifferent! You look so different!' and then when Nosh and me, Nosh just went [mimicks N giggling] [group laughs] and she she goes 'Ha to' [Urdu words] like she says she goes, 'Oh so since when did you put the you know put the hijab on?' and stuff and I went, we said. 'Ah well it's been about two years'.

N: [Yeah and then she was like, 'Well it's a bit much isn't it?'

A: [Yeah, 'Its a bit too much isn't it?' [laughs].

N: [And it's like, 'Look your dressed how you want to dress and I'm not making any sort of judgements, I'm not saying anything to you, that's your prob. that's your business. I'm wearing a piece of cloth and it's covering something, it's not showing anything I'm not rebuk. its just a piece of cloth'. And it's such a big deal I just don't understand what a big deal it is.

M: It's like I was reading this err Leila Ahmed book erm, is that how you pronounce her name?

- N:** Leila Ahmed, yeah.
- M:** I think it's really interesting she's the chapters she's written, one of her chapters is primarily on Egypt and err colonialism and and she's saying the how you know all the kind of polemics that went on. In in a sense I guess she was suggesting that we still suffer from them. That you know you you have this country colonising going round the world colonising places and they had to justify say why their religion is better. So they ended up with things like, 'Oh you know the women are oppressed, they have to cover their heads', and stuff like this and they you know are actually taking this negative side.
- N:** Yeah, Frantz Fanon has written stuff on Algeria and there about erm you know how it is how err the colonialists came in and they they tried, to try and destabilise the culture of Algeria they got their attacks on the institution and the veil and the women and tried to get them off, but how they again you know used that against them. And then they err=
- I:** =Is it true that they banned people wearing them in France?
- A:** Yeah it's like=
- M:** =And even then you know I've heard stories that kids go to school with the hijab on and they just pull take them off their heads.
- A:** [That's just it, recent recent recently erm a friend of mine she's she's Muslim and basically I mean erm Islamic dress, there's you know different opinions about it, but Islamic dress you have to cover your hair but also but also you have to wear erm a garment that doesn't show the parting of your legs right, which doesn't show your ankles either. And and erm and this friend of mine she went to school shes only about like fourteen you know and and err they said to her that her skirt was too long. So basically the teacher got a pair of scissors and cut her skirt.
- B:** You're joking? Just there and then?
- A:** [Yeah.
- N:** Well they they they tug at their skirts. It's just ridiculous.
- A:** And that's happening a lot.
- I:** [Also in Regents Park I've seen some girls who wear like skin tight jeans and they've got a hijab on as well. They like they you know wear really tight clothes and they've got a hijab on on top of that or a bandana or something you know like covering it up.
- N:** [Yeah thats like a different err, yeah I think like erm I guess everyone just does it...
- A:** [The thing is like at the end of the day
- N:** ...differently and that's their own business. Like for example Ayesha Ayesha wouldn't wear like a skirt that's not up to her knees and that won't show the palm of her legs but say I would. So it's just
- I:** [What about when you when you lot cover do some people think sometimes that 'oh she's probably done something really bad and now she's trying to make up for it'.

N: Ahhmm, no, no I don't think so=

I: =What about in the streets the way people look at

N: [Well erm I, well this happened I I was walking down the street. I was crossing the road at a zebra crossing and I tripped over. And and I I fell on my knees and there was this really old woman, she could barely walk and she err she was English I think and she comes up to me and goes, [mimicking a high pitched croaky voice] 'Stop praying in the middle of the road' [group laughs]. And I was just like, 'I fell' [laughs], you know. I mean down the street yeah people sometimes do say make comments.

A: [I think on the tube, I think on the tube like when when they see me like and they've got this certain image of me and they think of me in a certain way and then they see me reading a newspaper or reading a really sort of academic book and it's just like [mimicks a shocked / surprised facial expression].

N: I I was reading David Eddings 'cause I love David Eddings and someone looked at the book, looked at me, looked at the book and kept looking at me. It's like people have so many preconceived ideas.

I: It's like Pakistani women right, I've seen these Pakistani women they don't cover like when we walk past them they put their scarves on, when we've gone past they take them off again. You know and they start walking around as soon as they see a Pakistani man they cover. They'll walk around town and not cover do you know what I mean.

N: [That's culture that's what they've been like socialised in. Like for example when we go to Pakistan erm the the normal behaviour for us would be that when someone older than my dad like an err a Male erm respectable member of the family walks into the room we should put the like we should cover our hair then. Even if he's my mehram like you know. So, I think it's a lot to do with culture and

J: It's not only to do with culture it's like racial as well=

N: =Oh yeah definitely=

J: =like I remember when I was working on security over the summer and there was a one of the like other security guards he like for the whole of the two months that I was working there he could not sort of comprehend in his head that I did not drink. Like what it was with him was that 'Oh you don't drink what a sad life you must be leading. Oh you such an unhappy person I bet you spend all the time in the mosque don't you?' And I'm like, 'What?! You you're just are not able to comprehend that that like, 'Oh yeah I'm going down the pub now. Oh shouldn't I have mentioned it'', and things like that. [group laugh]

N: Y'know the worst is say if erm if I swear, like you know if a swear word comes out and someone'll go [in a shocked expression] 'Ah!'. The whole like you know the whole room will just stop and look at me and I'll just be like 'Okay' [laughs] you know. It's err you know your just supposed to be prim and proper and docile, can't make any mistakes and what not and it's just=

- M:** =I think in a sense that, [to J] like you say about you know I got that the entire well you know I won't go into it, but when I was err first became a Muslim a school friend was err stood in a pub waiting for me to come and go and get one, you know [group laughs]. I mean I used to be a real heavy drinker as well you know. They'd be on their first and I'd be on my third you know. I think I mean it's weird that there is that they have this concept of because they can drink, because they can kill themselves with alcohol and they can kill themselves with smoking and they can kill themselves with crack or whatever you know, they're you know to them it's like a gift. I mean the way I see it is that I got more of a gift because if I don't do these things then I'm not gonna suffer from these diseases. Like Aisha and I, my wife, were watching a programme on ecstasy and it was it was hilarious because we were sat there going to each other 'that was us once, we used to be like that' [group laughs]. It was you know it was really weird. And and people were you know saying 'Well people have stopped drinking' but they were taking ecstasy.
- B:** [Jokingly suggests] Would you reenact that for the voxbox you know that scene with your wife?
- M:** Yeah [laughs].
- B:** Erm just to kind of move on to a point that we haven't covered that much erm which is kind of around the idea of fundamentalism and how you'd define that and does it have a role to play in Islam? Erm how do people feel about how the media has=
- I:** =It's like I watched a film the other day it was Executive Decision. There was a part where that this guy's playing and he goes he's praying and goes Allah u Akbar and he starts in to one and I was thinking where did that come from you know.
- M:** [Yeah I saw that.
- I:** It's from True Lies, yeah.
- J:** [True Lies.
- M:** And they're on this plane and they're all of and you know most of them have got these beards, they're all=
- J:** =Yeah but there's err the reason for that isn't there that it's supposedly because the Cold War was over the West needed a new enemy and it's like
- N:** [Yeah
- A:** [Yeah
- B:** [Yeah that is the kind of new theory. I mean do people genuinely feel that that has been the case?
- N:** Erm I think well it well I think it sort of goes back to Orientalism as well you know the despotic erm Muslim leaders type thing. Erm again I don't know how much you guys have talked about this but I I for I mean it depends a lot of it depends on how you define fundamentalism you know. [to A and B] Have you did you guys talk about that?
- B:** Not in the discussion.

N: Well like for you know a lot of people if you believe in the fundamentals of Islam which are you know one God, the five pillars and you they they consider themselves fundamentalists. But like then there's this other view that fundamental fundamentalists equals terrorism.

A: Or that fundamentalism fundamentalists

J: [Yeah the reason that terrorists function is that's extremists like Muslim extremist=

N: =Yeah but like see in media representation that's considered like fundamentalism.

I: [Yeah.

A: [The thing is like I think there's like three issues concerned 'cause there's like fundamentalists is believing in terrorist experience etc etc. Fundamentalist can also be erm erm mixing religion with politics, say for instance certain Muslim family going to the mosque, Christian families to the mosaleum, and then fundamentalism which you know as Nosh said it I mean what does the word fundamentalist mean you know it's timely it's you know religion or going back to your roots stuff like that. Now within Islamic fundamentalism all three positions exist, yeah. There are certain groups who do erm in the name of Islam who do terrorist attacks on schools and stuff like that. Erm but again what defines these things as terror and extreme and and or mixing politics with Islam or being fundamentalist is Islam.

M: Yeah or one person's soldier is another person's terrorist.

A: Yeah, exactly. I mean like say for instance Hamas in in Palestine yeah or Israel yeah I mean I consider them to be Mujahid but my dad considers them to be terrorists as does the media. You see it's to do with your understanding of Islam. And essentially the reason why I think they're Mujahid is because they're fighting their defence of jihad in large erm Israeli occupied land. You know erm

N: I think also erm what I find extremely disturbing is the way erm well you know the media they don't wanna listen to they they mete out like you know this the people who aren't so outrageous and who don't aren't so militant who don't have like extreme views like you know err violent views. So they get meted out and the Muslim people who are represented are you know extreme like terrorists stroke extremists.

I: And do you remember the Oklahoma bombing and they thought the Muslims did it and then they found out

N: [Oh yeah and now that's like and nowthat's

A: [Yeah and they haven't even given a formal apology or anything.

J: [Yeah and they didn't even like, they started condemning these groups all the groups and they got all these professional academics to talk about how this could occur and there's no substance in it.

- N:** so like now if I'm wearing hijab I'm err I'm an extremist. You know because I think that I think the media has a lot to do with erm a lot of prejudice. [Yeah and so, yeah and
- I:** programme once about a year ago. Public Eye [Did any of you watch that Public Eye about
- A:** [I saw one of them where
- I:** Yeah that one yeah where they try to get them to talk about the holocaust and everything you know=
- A:** =Yeah I mean the thing is right is that the media like say for instance erm the issue of homosexuality okay, now that opinion does not come from Hizb-ut-Tahrir that opinion comes from the Qur'an. And there's I mean amongst Muslims
- I:** [Even the Bible. You know ask Christians about what they think of homosexuality and they always say [Muslims erm
- A:** [Yeah and Judaism you know as well. And why should we as Muslims be apologetic about that. You know erm I mean like erm it it comes as I said the freedom and restrictiveness thing we're defining things in terms of freedom and restrictiveness and me I'm not apologetic about that. You know I mean I I think there's huge contention amongst the al Muhajiroun and I'm quite an active member of al Muhajiroun, but again I can say that the media distortion of al Muhajiroun is huge right. I mean yesterday's programme I was sitting laughing through half of it because like a lot of it was inaccurate. But I think also within the Muslims there's like a huge misunderstanding because although we say that we don't take everything from the media in essence it seems like we like a lot of people do. Erm as far as like styles and views is concerned you know I agree Islam should be propagated in a gentle way but that doesn't mean that that's the only style that Islam can be got through. I mean the prophet salala hoo wassalam, he was being mocked by Abu Talib and Abu Jahid and and he said to them you know eventually he reached his peak and he said to them I've come for the slaughter. That's not very gentle but it's it's enigmatic it's charismatic it gets the message across yeah. And I think that there is a very sort of defensive and apologetic attitude within the Muslims that just because and we're not anti Jew. I mean it's within the Islamic state that the Jews prospered that that their sanctity was saved.
- I:** [Spanish inquisition=
- A:** =Yeah exactly. We're not we're not anti Jew. You know and as far as homosexuals are concerned they can do whatever they want in their own thing err in their own erm err privacy or whatever that's got nothing to do with us right. But on a public level we're not going to say it's okay because Allah Allah says that it's not okay. It's like erm
- M:** [What's ironic is that the people who have done the most damage to say to Jews are actually Christians=
- A:** =Yeah Yeah.
- M:** [And you know on their way to slaughter Muslims they slaughter Jews. It goes hand in hand.

N: It's just like when people's you know like I don't like seeing erm homosexual=

A: =acts=

N: =erm like representation on tv. Just like I don't like seeing heterosexual activity on tv. I think there's no need for it. So it, does that make me like what does that make me? Do you understand? It's like yeah but I mean I think that like as far as like erm spreading Islam through force or whatever I just think people have different opinions but I also think that one opinion is basically represented in the media. Like for example I'm sure that erm

A: [You see the thing is that like for=

N: =[to Ayesha] can I finish what I was saying?

A: Sorry yeah.

N: I'm sure that a lot of people a lot of Muslims when they saw the erm err the the programme last night I mean I I thought that it was biased yes but I thought that Omar did a pretty good job of you know making himself look like a complete fool as well. I don't think that I mean he cracked a lot of jokes that I don't think he could afford to crack those jokes. I mean if he's in such a high situation in such a high position where he's got so much media attention I think that you need to deal with that extremely sensitively and extremely delicately. Because basically what's gonna happen is that erm you're going to be erm you know used as being spokesman for the Muslim people. And I just think that should be I just think that sort of situation where you have six hundred and twenty reporters after you I just think you need to deal with that very very sensitively. And I don't think that's

A: What what I was saying to Mustafa today was that virtually what I said to you that in the beginning what how the programme was actually meant to be. Erm I think Omar realised that they did make him out a fool of him. And I think that really needs to be subjective erm because he did try to get it banned and he did try to do a lot of things that he didn't know how to do and he basically ended up letting us down. Erm but basically what what happened was that erm he he had been approached by Jon and the cameraman Saul about a year ago. And and it was in response to the accusation that al Muhajiroun had funded six million to Hamas. That was like the reason behind it which was all fallacy anyway you know. Erm and they were basically saying that 'Oh we'd like to present you with more feeling and and like so that your message is more like comes across', blah blah blah. Anyway, Omar did it with the intentions that whatever comes across comes across for the sake of Islam anyway, yeah. Erm 'cause he believed like most of us believe that all publicity is good publicity in the sense that if it gets the message of Islam across any more one more whoever then that's the truth passed yeah. And it's up to like whoever receives it to go out and find out more. Now as as Muslims we all have a sense of duty towards like spreading the word blah blah blah. Erm I it's I won't go, actually you know I don't want it to sound like I'm sitting here defending Omar Bakiri, but at the end of the day I think the programme yeah, it did make him out to be a fool yeah. And it did make erm the Islamic cause to to appear quite an insignificant non threatening one yeah. But at the same time the amount of concepts that were passed through yeah that highlighted certain Islamic concepts and certain things that could like erm cause Muslims to go out and find out more were so many and I think it's subjective as to like to say which what's more important than the other you know. I mean=

M: =But this is the whole problem with with the the media the way it's used in in England. [

- A:** Yeah exactly.
- M:** It's used in the way that you know just just the actual act of sitting there and watching there is very passive and you can just be applying anything you want. And you don't have to go you just you just take it in, you just you know, and so someone interviews I mean I've seen interviews with you know famous sheikhs and that like that people that are err running an organisation an organisation. Camera shots to them, AK47, Qur'an next to the AK47
- I:** [Yeah. [
- A:** [Yeah.
- M:** And the book showing you it's this image it's completely you know it's that's what you're seeing and I think the media is so it is just so the media in this country is just so corrupt. Walk down the street and in pictures and adverts and things there's just so much subliminal you know that's going on you know it's so
- A:** The thing is I mean admittedly you know I mean you can say something right and you say it with conviction and your saying the truth. Now whether it gets misconstrued or not that's beyond your control. Like as Nosh mentioned like she used the words violence and militancy and force yeah, now I mean I was I was quite perceptive in listening to what Jon Ronson was saying and the amount of times he he like took bits out of what Omar was saying and decontextualised them was so many. Like he was saying that Omar was calling for a violent jihad in Britain and and and against the Jews and it's just like yeah but as far as jihad is concerned 'cause as far as jihad is concerned I'd call for a violent jihad in Israel. You know 'cause jihad that's the way it is when it's fighting and and it's defending your land. But as far as in Britain it's concerned it's simply an ideological jihad. Jihad is so many different types. [
- N:** [There were so many times like err I don't know what his name is but like the narrator the guy who was=
- A:** =Jon.
- N:** Jon. There were so many times I think like a few he goes like erm like 'Omar believes in killing the Jews', but I never once heard it from his mouth.
- B:** But you did you read the article in there and it said towards the end like the last day or something erm someone asked erm Jon Ronson, 'Oh are you know you're a Jew aren't you?' And erm
- A:** [Well Omar, no he basically said to Omar he was just like erm he said that erm he goes, 'Oh I'm a Jew', and Omar just said 'Yeah I knew'. And then erm someone he claims someone in the background said 'Well that's worse than being', I can't remember what it was but erm but again you know that was err apparently that didn't happen. The same thing with Saatchi and Saatchi. Omar actually came and he was just like 'What is Saatchi and Saatchi?'. You know there were so many things that he had put in from himself.
- B:** I think the interesting point was that Omar did know, he did know that Jon Ronson was a Jew from the very beginning and yet he kind of you know he accepted him.
- N:** [Yeah that's that yeah.

B: And the article that message is I mean okay it's embedded within lots of other things but that could have like you were saying could have developed an understanding that doesn't fit into all that other stuff about well you know 'he wouldn't even look at Jew'. He's actually allowing him to follow him.

N: Exactly.

B: He also knew that he was keeping it secret all that time and yet still.

J: I think if anything the media they want to show Islam in a bad light because I think a lot of the times that in terms of what takes place it's not necessarily Islamic it's more political=

N: =Yeah, yeah.

J: [It's definitely like that what because they happen to be Muslim you know they or most people think that err a taken for granted assumption that that's what is expected of Muslims.

B: Well it's like with the Bradford riots I mean not even all of those youth were Muslim anyway, but it was like this was a fundamentalist Islamic activity and it wasn't all even to do with religion.

J: [Yeah, yeah that's what I mean=

M: ='Oh that's what they do everyday!' [laughs]. I've I've read like a lot of articles about err Bradford and Salman Rushdie and they were saying that they some of the worst like it was actually one of the worst things that happened due to the Brad. the liberal err the liberal people and and it was like you know it was like in newspaper coverage and things like this that were doing a lot of damage to err Islam. You know this kind of err liberal libertarian became very err infact they were kind of put to the test in that that they wouldn't they didn't erm they weren't liberal. And they started they were put on the spot and the liberal views turned into really dangerous like right wing you know the truth came out.

N: [It's like liberal fundamentalism=

M: =Yeah oh yeah, well that's right [laughs] kind of err it's such a thing that I think it's a total massive

N: [But err I I just wanted to err you know erm during the Bradford book burnings were there actually riots? Or was it just a peaceful book burning?

B: Well there were kind of some incidents which were kind of then taken out of proportion but there were kind of incidents of kind of activities between the police and it's a bit like the Notting Hill coverage there's always always going to be a riot and many times it's just a small scale incident, but one camera can shoot two scenes and make it look like you know

N: [Yeah and because there's fire involved and fire means danger and whatever.

M: [I mean I I a major problem for me now that I have with sort of that I discuss often with my wife is that you know 'Are we going to stay in this country?' or 'Are we going to stay in this community?' At the moment

I live in a community where there's there's that I know maybe two families Muslim families, there's no mosque there's no nothing. Come to London to go to the mosque. The fact is that you know wherever you turn and I don't think I think the situation is going to get worse and worse I think that this situation of media representation of Muslims is going to get worse and worse and I think really really violently in terms of you know the real outcome and I'm not running away from it, but the question I ask myself is 'Do I stay here?' And and I everyone I meet learns something about Islam by talking about things which they could doubt which I do and which is a good point. Another one is that you know I I wanna bring up my family in a Muslim in an Islamic community so do I move to somewhere like Bradford, North Yorkshire where there's you know where there's more Muslims, where my child's going to get an Islamic education and not a biased western you know for me a sick you know really twisted education.

N: It it does tend to make you a bit paranoid as well because we [referring to herself and Shagufta] went to a restaurant before coming here and the woman just threw the napkins on the table, she just threw the cutlery in front of me. I'm like 'she saw the programme last night she hates me'. [group laugh] You know just you just think really confusing things like yeah.

M: I changed my name to Mohammed and err and you'll be amazed you know if you're talking to someone on the phone and say 'yeah my name is Mustafa Mohammed', then they meet you and you're you're you know and the treatment is totally different. And I was kind of like the weirdest thing, I never thought that this would happen to me that I was actually witnessing racism. That that it was stupid because it you know if they'd seen me they wouldn't be they wouldn't react you know and that really really does bring it home to which then I thought once I was gonna I was going for jobs, part time jobs, and I was gonna do get two application forms one with my old name and one with my new name on and see what ones I would get an interview for. I wasn't even getting interviews for Tesco's, year before I could you know go to Tesco's and you know get a job straight away. It's it really got to that stage [laughs].

N: Actually when when I first started wearing the hijab a lot of people actually said to me about erm you know its really difficult for you to get a job and you know. And I went to err I went to like a women's class and I said they were just like 'Yeah so what are you doing?' And I was like 'I'm doing my Masters and afterwards I would think about doing a PGCE?', 'Why?', 'Cause I want to teach English Lit'. 'No, no you can't do that you're wearing a hijab, the system will be against you', and you know blah blah blah. And it's just like okay even if that's true then maybe I should challenge that system maybe I should do something about that.

A: [Yeah that's just it you can't be defeatist, you shouldn't be defeatist you should always challenge things like that.

N: But erm plus like it's not like this is a new thing I mean like you know there's established discourses upon you know like people who suffer discrimination.

M: I hope hope my my own father in law never hears this tape [group laughs] but I've like known him for two or three years and he has a very, they both come from a quaker background so they have a liberal 'oh we accept everyone' kind of attitude. But essentially it's Christian based and and he was all very accepting and you know he'd when when my wife changed her name he was really quite okay about it. You know and on face value they were really accepting of us. It came about maybe about four months ago I'd actually arranged to move to London to be near Finsbury Park mosque. And err and this all fell

through anyway but whilst this was going on my err father-in-law was ringing me up and saying 'you're endangering my err my daughter's life, you've brainwashed her, you're going to brainwash your daughter', you know all the the truth came out, from this liberal point view turned into this nasty, fascist bast. [group laugh loudly] you know. And I was thinking hang on hang on you know this guy's attacking me you know. I was really upset I was I was almost in tears. After the phone I'd you know I'd defended Islam and and then afterwards I was so upset. This guy who had been so kind and err and good and the truth had you know the truth had come out and really upset me. And I kind of thought this is when it gets nasty, this is the truth you know. You know on face value people can be so accepting and liberal and

J: Yeah that's really contentious area like you know when people go, 'Oh you're like being paranoid and that', but we've got every reason to be paranoid, it's not like just imaginary you know. I donna I suppose there are

A: It's like you know when you [to Javed] were behind me when we got on the train

J: Yeah=

A: =Right. Did you see that the the guard was talking to the people in front? [J has blank expression on face] Well like he was really friendly blah blah blah and then I sort of went up to him and said 'Excuse me could you confirm which train goes to White Hart Lane?'. And first of all he ignored me [M and B laugh sarcastically] and then like I was just like 'Hello' and then he goes, [n a short sharp tone] 'This one'. And then I go, 'Okay is it six or seven?' and then he finally looks at me and he's just like, [again in a short sharp tone] 'Seven'. And I was just like [shakes her head with expression indicating 'What Have I done wrong?'].

N: And we have friends who have been spat on. You know who it's just terrible.

A: [Yeah.

B: I think I said to Ayesha there's this thing in the Runnymede Trust report there's this letter that err a 15 year old girl sends to the Runnymede Trust and she recently discovered Islam for herself. And she said you know I started wearing a hijab and it was a choice for me. And it was like why all of a sudden all these teachers started behaving really differently towards me. And she goes, 'I have to go to great lengths to tell people I haven't turned into a terrorist'. You know like this fifteen year old going to school and it's=

N: =Like she's carrying a machine gun with her.

M: Yeah under her hijab or something.

A: [Under her hijab. [group laughs]

M: I I think I think it's a major major problem and I don't think err I think it happens all the time.

N: [I think so too.

M: Especially to practising Muslims. You know the fact that they are practising Muslims who are trying their best to live by Islam which is considered like you know you can live Islam anywhere in the world. The fact is that if you've got someone that's totally opposite and is defying everything that you believe in and the essentials you know the fundamentals that

you believe in it's a problem in this country it's a problem. You know if you've got one culture teaching freedom in the in the sense that women can run around with nothing on and go to raves and drop ecstasy and stuff like this you know its just a great conflict it really it's like. And then on the other hand you've got people teaching them teaching them edu. education you know and modesty you know some really great great you know you know ethics. There's going to be a problem.

B: It's kind of about twenty to and we've gone on longer than planned. I should finish by just thanking you all for a very interesting discussion and some of you have already expressed an interest in taking part in the video so I look forward to seeing you again for that . I'll get in touch with err more information about that soon. Obviously help yourselves to more refreshments before going and feel free to stay for a while for a more informal chat amongst yourselves.