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"I feel a push-pull most days…how can there not be?"

Narratives of dual identity and Counselling Psychology

By

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Declaration

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This portfolio is made up of three components: an empirical piece of research, an academic journal article and a clinical case study, with each piece presented in fulfilment of the core competencies required to practice as a Counselling Psychologist (British Psychological Society, 2017). While each component of this portfolio can be viewed as a distinct and separate piece of work they are also linked together, bound by a common theme of multiple selves. Permeating this portfolio is the recognition of this plurality in the identity of the research sample, as an important aspect of clinical significance to the practicing clinician, and evidenced in a therapeutic model.

The central piece of the portfolio is a qualitative research study, which seeks to explore the negotiation of dual identity amongst British born Muslim women. Over the last 15 years, there has been a documented shift in the perception of Muslims in Britain, which in turn has impacted on the experience of this group. For some, the Islamic faith is viewed in juxtaposition to British values (Abbas, 2007; Kundnani, 2007; ICM, 2008), often resulting in a largely discriminatory experience for British Muslims (Hopkins, 2011). My aim for this study was to give the women interviewed a platform on which they could voice their stories of living in a socio-political context in which their religious identity is often perceived in opposition to their British national identity. However, ultimately, my initial interest in this area of research stemmed from my own experiences; I am a Muslim woman who has lived in London my whole life. I have spent extensive periods of time reflecting on my own British-Muslim negotiation, and if this were to be considered a polarised spectrum, I have found myself at various points of the scale at different times in my life. Despite having siblings and a number of British Muslim friends, this was not something I had ever felt able to share with others. I feared a judgemental response from my Muslim friends, as if admitting my difficulties with understanding who I was would somehow be perceived as un-Islamic. I feared ridicule from my non-Muslim friends, as I was sure how I felt could not possibly be understood. Most significantly for me, this was never a theme within my own therapy, and since starting this

research piece I have often wondered why the identity challenges and conflicts I have experienced as a British Muslim remained unspoken. Over the course of my own therapeutic training, I have learnt the importance of voicing the difficult questions, to ensure that we do not collude with our client by avoiding difficult subjects. This led me to reflect on how we, as Counselling Psychologists, attend to the religion beliefs that our client may hold, and how this lens impacts the way they understand themselves, as well as make sense of their world and the interpersonal relationships they have.

This inspired the second part of my portfolio, an article written for the Journal of Counselling Psychology. This article aims to use the findings of the research study to firmly argue and demonstrate the importance of engaging with multiple parts of client, including their religious ideology, in order to work with the clients interaction with their world and those who exist within it. I decided to write this article for the Journal of Counselling Psychology for a number of reasons, firstly this is a high impact peer reviewed journal published by the American Psychological Association. Therefore this publication has a broad audience of practicing Counselling Psychologists and I felt passionate about the importance of this message to practicing clinicians. Secondly, I had noticed that this journal in particular regularly publishes empirical studies and brief report articles on multicultural and multi-ethnic issues relating counselling practice. I took this to indicate that the audience is likely to be interested in a study that suggests we must broaden our understanding of diversity to include religious systems.

The final part of this portfolio is a clinical case study, presented as a demonstration of my clinical practice as a Counselling Psychologist. This piece was taken from my final year placement, an NHS secondary care service, which was particularly important for me. It was within this setting that I was given the opportunity to work with integrative models of therapy, a therapeutic stance that I had not encounter prior to this. Within this case study, I present a female client whom I worked with for 16 sessions using Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT). CAT presents a concept of dialogism, a theory that views the self as an inherently social

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construct, which continues to be constructed and reconstructed through interactions with others. This emphasises the social nature of consciousness (Pollard, 2004), and the CAT therapist attempts to work with the client build a picture of these various selves as part of the therapeutic work, describing self processes in terms of the relationships with internalised and externalised voices. I decided to present this case within this portfolio due to the presence of the exploration of the multiples selves, for both a client and practitioner, within a clinical setting.

This portfolio was inspired by the desire to understand others. Embedded within this is the acknowledgement that in order to do this we must recognise that we exist as multiple sided objects, chiselled by a multitude of factors that need to be illuminated and explored.

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Part One: Doctoral Research

A Qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity

among British Muslim women

Abstract

This qualitative research study focuses on the negotiation of identity among British born Muslim women living in London in 2016. Semi-structured narrative interviews were carried out with five British Muslim women with the resulting data analysed using Critical Narrative Analysis. The analysis resulted in two overarching constructions; the construction of the Muslim woman and the construction of the British Muslim, underpinned by gender inequality. These intended to capture the rich and complex intra-psychic negotiations between identities for this population. The findings are discussed from a feminist perspective, and the impacts of broader social and cultural contexts were explored. Observations and suggestions were made in terms of implications for Counselling Psychology as a discipline, as well as the contribution of the study to therapeutic work, and avenues for future research were suggested.

<u>Chapter 1: Introduction and literature review</u>

In this research, I hope to present some understanding of the negotiation of dual identity amongst British born Muslim women. To date, exploration of this area has predominately been focused within the fields of sociology and social psychology, with a notable gap in the knowledgebase from a Counselling Psychology perspective. UK Government reports have described Muslim populations as self-segregating and adopting of practices that are inherently in conflict with British values (Hussain & Bagguley, 2005; Modood, 2006; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007) and research indicates the British Muslim population may have difficulties marrying what may be conflicting identities (Balsano & Sirin, 2007). While the media supports the sensationalist portrayal of British Muslims as potential 'jihadi' radicals (Song, 2012), we have little information of the way in which British Muslims manage these two aspects of their identity.

The present study's attention on the intra-psychic negotiation, contextualised within broader social and political contexts, is supported by the implementation of a narrative analysis of the participant data. It is my aim that by approaching the subject in this way, I will be able to maintain a focus on psychological understandings and implications, whilst acknowledging socio-cultural and political considerations, thereby offering a unique and meaningful contribution to the field.

<u>Chapter overview</u>

The chapter presented here aims to take the reader on a journey to explore the context within which the proposed research exists. The chapter starts with an attempt to clarify key terms, which due to their subjective nature, can be both sensitive and obscure. I will then explain key theoretically relevant concepts as well as offer a critique of previous research into the subject area.

While I have been careful to be simultaneously open minded and focused on the research aims throughout this process, it is important to acknowledge that which is omitted. This

chapter, and this investigation, draws attention to the female voice, therefore I have deliberately avoided a wealth of research that exists around Muslim men. Instead, I have chosen to explore concepts that are unique to the female experience in Islam, such as the Islamic headscarf. Whilst my participant pool contained women who chose to wear the Islamic headscarf as well as women who chose not to, this overt expression of Islam felt to be an important concept to explore.

1.1. Clarification of key terms: 'British', 'Muslim', 'Islam', 'gender' and 'identity'

As a Counselling Psychologist I aim to emphasise the individual, subjective experience over much else (Bury & Strauss, 2006; Kasket, 2013). In keeping with the humanistic philosophy underpinning the field and practice of Counselling Psychology, the aim of this research is to explore the ways in which British Muslim women intra-psychically negotiate the dual identity of being British and Muslim within the context of 2016 London.

As some of the key concepts being investigated lack objectivity, it is important to deconstruct key terms and explore their meaning.

The term 'British' is a complex and unclear concept to define, and one that I had to grapple with in the writing of this thesis. Some previous research has defined the boundaries of what it means to be British as simplistically as relating it to colonialism, military involvement and even sports such as football (Clarke & Garner, 2010). Indeed, there was a time that the label British held such strong connotations that it was considered in some way 'racist' and fundamentally 'un-British' (Clarke & Garner, 2010). More recently, attempts to define the term have become political, with cross party Prime Ministers making attempts to delineate and rebrand what it means to be British (Blair, 2000; Brown, 2007; Cameron, 2014).

One could take the position of defining 'Britishness' based upon citizenship and geography, and from this perspective it is imperative to acknowledge and understand the geography of Britain and the impact this may have on this group membership. Britain is comprised of multiple countries, and each nation may define and relate to the term in differing ways

(Karlsen & Nazroo, 2015). This position could lead us to deconstruct this further, and conceptualise nations as human communities that live within their historic homelands, have shared histories and myths, as well as shared traditions, symbols and practices (Smith, 1991; 1998). This proposal would suggest a need to differentiate between nations (England, Scotland and Wales) and states (Britain), however in a multination state, such as Britain, there may be considerable difference as well as overlap in the symbols, myths and traditions between constituent nations, rendering this position as too simplistic.

At first glance, when considering how one may identify with a British national identity, it would be easy to consider this as a linear dimension; one either identifies as British or not. However, research suggests that it would be more appropriate to conceptualise national identity as a multifaceted concept that contains complex heterogeneous communities (Vadher & Barrett, 2009). Further research proposes that the processes involved in national identification are dynamic in nature, with values, traditions and boundaries between identities being constantly negotiated and redefined (Baumann, 1996; Maira, 2002). For the purposes of this study, the term British is used to refer to one's national identity and country of birth. As this study is contextualised in London, it will focus on individuals who were born in London and currently live in London, irrespective of parental country of origin.

Islam is a monotheistic religious system based on the holy book of the Qur'an, and the teaching and practices of the Prophet Muhammed. As someone who themselves identifies as Muslim, it is difficult for me to step away from my own subjectivity with respect to this term, and throughout my research it has proven difficult to objectively further outline and differentiate the concepts of 'Muslim' and 'Islam'. I find myself wondering to what degree does one have to believe in Islam in order to be considered Muslim? Whilst there is, of course, an idiosyncratic element to this question, the ways in which we conceptualise Muslims is an important point to address. If we are to question what makes one a Muslim, we must inherently question what a Muslim is, and what makes a Muslim different in their religious ideology to other comparable religion followers. There is considerable overlap

between the three main monotheist religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and whilst this would not be the appropriate platform to discuss the philosophy of these religions, the similarities as well as differences deserve recognition.

When proposing the exploration of dual identity among British Muslims, it is important to first consider to what extent the Islamic faith plays an important role for these individuals. Jacobson (1998) offers a review of the literature, concluding that religion plays an important aspect of social identity amongst British Muslims across generations. The ways in which individuals express this attachment to their Muslim identity varies widely, with Jacobson suggesting that within the British Muslim community exists a small but growing minority who are particularly religiously devout, with this devoutness expressed in a ways as wide ranging as Islamic activism to consistent and careful religious practice. Around this group exists a large cohort whose religious belief and practice vary widely whilst maintaining a degree of commitment and attachment to the Islamic faith (Jacobson, 1998). From this, we can conclude that there are various ways that one can both 'be' a Muslim, as well as express their religious identity and ideology. For the purposes of clarity, within this present study I will be referring to individuals who identify themselves as following the Islamic faith as Muslims.

In a similar way, gender and sex can also be difficult concepts to differentiate, and their distinction is often dependent upon subject matter and perspective. Sociologically, sex is often used in reference to biology; the chromosomal pattern with which one is born, which individuals are assumed to identify with for the purposes of reproduction (Burkitt, 2008). From this perspective, one is a female because of the presence of the XX chromosomes and the associated female reproductive systems. Gender, on the other hand is considered to refer to the behavioural elements of one's existence; the roles we play and the characteristics we possess (Burkitt, 2008). From this we can see that gender can be culturally specific and fluid. The literature available on issues relating to sex and gender is vast, however for the purposes of this research I will be referring to women and females synonymously, and using gender as a term to refer to those who identify as being of the male

or female sex. Whilst this may be reductionist of a whole body of literature, there is support for this position. There are those who argue for the use of the term gender only, contending that there is such vast overlap between sex and gender, that when we attribute gender we implicitly make assumptions of sex as a central element of this attribution (Kessler, 1995).

What is identity? As a word that has become part of our common discourse, the term identity may conjure thoughts as varying as those of identity crisis to concerns over identity theft and fraud, indicating identity is a possession that can be verified, stolen and falsified (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In the writing of this thesis, identity has been a complex concept to which I have had to pay careful attention, ensuring that I consider a breadth of perspectives on the definition of identity, across disciplines within the social sciences. Identity can be understood as characteristics, social relationships, and roles that define who we are; one can occupy multiple identities - son, friend, partner, sibling - as well as be a reflection of who we were, who we are, and who we wish to be (Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012). Across the literature the language used to describe these concepts can vary, with some researchers referring to 'subjectivity', the 'self' or 'identity' interchangeably; these terminological differences are often unimportant, as all relate to one's personal subjectivity (Elliott, 2007). The term 'subjectivity' relates to the capability one has to conceive oneself as a subject, that is to psychically view oneself as an entity, formed of ones experiences, that relates to an other entity as an object (Benveniste, 2002). Equally, whilst the 'self' and 'identity' may be comprehended as similar, it would be erroneous to see these as synonym concepts. Whilst identity contributes to the self-concept - what one believes to be true about oneself (Baumeister, 1998; Forgas & Williams, 2002) - there may be identities that one may possess that are not based on the self, for example national identity (Elliott, 2007). In this respect, identity can be understood as a fluid and flexible construct, which is negotiated and altered constantly (Howarth, 2002; Reicher 2004). I will discuss theories of identity within latter parts of this chapter.

At the centre of this portfolio is the acknowledgement of the multiple identities held by the participants of the research study. This can be seen in the increasing trend to hyphenate

ones identity, such as referring to oneself as British-Asian, Black-British or British-Muslim, as a reflection of ones hybridisation of multiple identities (Maxwell, 2006). In this hyphenation, one is referring to identities that are simultaneously bound and separated by multiple factors, including history and socio-political climate (Fine, 1994). It is important to consider further, the boundaries between these identities, as in positioning oneself in relation to a British cultural identity, one is then in a position to negotiate with a culture with particularly blurred boundaries and definitions, as discussed earlier. Smith (1991; 1998) suggests that there are two main models used to define the boundaries of national identities. On the 'ethnic model' the group is defined in terms of a common ancestry, ultimately resulting in a race or ethnicity focused view of the group, from which ethnic minority groups are inherently excluded. On the 'civic model', the group is defined as a community whose members share legal and civil rights and duties. This perspective was further developed by Jacobson (1997a) who suggested for her South Asian Muslim cohort, Britishness was associated with three key dimensions - civic, racial and cultural. Similar findings have been presented by Vadher and Barrett (2009), identifying six boundaries of Britishness - racial, civic/state, instrumental, historical, lifestyle and multicultural. This research communicates the complexity of identity and identity negotiation, as well as highlights some of the problems of linear, perhaps more quantitative, measurements of identity. For the purposes of this research, I decided to allow participants to self-identify as British Muslim, as this allows for a breadth of experiences and identification with these broad and complex concepts.

1.2. Muslims in Britain

According to the 2011 Census (Office of National Statistics, 2011), there are approximately 2.7 million people living within England and Wales who identify themselves as following the Islamic faith. This figure varies hugely across the country, with some boroughs in London having a Muslim population exceeding 34%; this is seven times the average figure for England and Wales (Office of National Statistics, 2011). Those Muslims of overseas parentage living in Britain, as well as in other parts of Western Europe, are in the position of

reconciling their ethnic and host nation identities as well as their Muslim group membership, which may explicitly differentiate them from the host nation due to the overt nature of traditional Islamic dress (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012). Within this European context, Muslims have been positioned as the social 'other' for many years, with the Islamic faith often seen as the very barrier that prevents the effective inclusion of those of Islamic background into European communities (Foner & Alba, 2008; Alba, 2005; Sanderson & Thomas, 2014).

Over the last 15 years we have observed a shift in the way in which Muslims are perceived in Britain, with the Muslim experience within Britain being largely discriminatory (Hopkins, 2011). Within a British context, the question of whether or not British values are in some way at opposition with those of the Islamic faith and practice has been raised by many, Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Abbas, 2007; Kundnani, 2007). There has also been question as to whether or not Muslims are willing, or are able, to integrate into what may be considered conventional British society (Abbas, 2005; 2007). Opinion polls have reflected this, with respondents feeling that Islamic and British values were incompatible and that Islam was to blame for the July 7th 2005 bombings in London (ICM, 2008).

Following the September 11th attacks on the United States in 2001, a political 'war on terror' was activated in the UK and in other nations around the world, the implementation of which has resulted in a near exclusive focus on young Muslims (Kundnani, 2007). In the UK, there have been a number of 'home grown' terrorist attacks including that of the 7th July 2005 bombings, in which four British Muslims were identified as the suicide bombers in the attack. Following this was the 2013 fatal attack on a soldier, Lee Rigby, in a suburb of South London, for which two British converts to Islam were convicted. Based on this rise of 'home grown terrorists' the UK government has commissioned various anti-terrorism programmes, including PREVENT and CONTEST, which disproportionately effect Muslim men (Hussain, 2013). These very government initiatives have been accused of themselves "…construct[ing] Muslims as potential extremists/enemies unless proven differently…" (McGhee, 2008, p. 49).

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Therefore, it is at least in part from these anti-terror programmes and associated laws, that the heightened sense of emergency and threat has been driven into everyday life (Hussain, 2013). This often focuses on presenting the barbarity of 9/11, 7/7 and the murder of Lee Rigby, as well as numerous unsuccessful plots published to the media, and thereby segregating the Muslim community to be outside of the 'civilised' world of the West (Hussain, 2013). For some, there has been a question of the Muslims populations' loyalty to the British establishment, perceived to be evidenced in the opposition to UK military action in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan by many British Muslims (Abbas, 2005). This has led others to question to what extent such Muslims affiliate themselves with being British, or rather set themselves apart as a detached community, and consequently become a potential threat to national security (Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007). Essentially, for many the Muslim community has become a homogenous, collective suspect to be feared.

It is argued that Muslim migrants to the UK, and their subsequent children, face an environment where a harmony between religious, social and national identity is not always possible to achieve, therefore leading to a conscious religious choice (Cesari, 2004). This religious choice reflects the way in which religious expression is less to do with family cultural inheritance, and more to do with an individualised personal experience and choice, such that one identifies as Muslim more so because one believes in the religious framework rather than due to family traditions (Roy, 2004; Davie, 2004; Kashyap & Lewis, 2012). In some studies, we can see that once individuals engage in this choice the impact of ones religious identity is vast, with research participants reporting that their religious identity even impacted their educational and career aspirations (Dwyer, Shah & Sanghera, 2008). Similar to this, for the younger generation of Muslims, religiosity tends to be more politicised (Pew Research Centre, 2006; GFK NOP Social Research, 2006), such as a greater importance of the overt expression of one's Islamic belief through the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, known as the hijab (I will explain this terminology further later) (Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007). Among second and third generation Muslims of migrant parents, research has suggested a

growth of an Islam focused upon a more 'purist' version of the Islamic faith, compared to their parents (Roy, 2004; Kibria, 2008). This changing expression of Muslim religiosity is perhaps in part due to the secularisation and polarised animosities perceived between the West and Islam, hence strengthening the Islamic identity, otherwise known as the *Ummah* (Abbas, 2005; Brown, 2006; Modood, 2006; Kashyap & Lewis, 2012). *Ummah* is an Arabic term referring to the Muslim collective or community, which allows for a unified Muslim community and transcends divisions of race, class or ethnicity (Brown, 2006).

1.2.1. The role of the media

The Muslim community in Britain have been the focus of frequent media and academic attention for many years, and it was suggested that as far back as the mid 1980s, approximately 200 books a year were published on 'Islamic fundamentalism' (Sayyid, 1997). The controversy over Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses as well as the more current concern over 'home grown terrorism' has led to growing media concerns over Islamic fundamentalism, and the implied alienation of the Muslim community from British society and values (Vertovec, 2002; Alexander, 2004; Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007; Bleich, 2009). The extensive media portrayal of Muslims in the UK largely presents the Muslim community in a negative light (Ameli, 2004; Moore, Mason & Lewis, 2008; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a; Greenberg & Miazhevich, 2012) even when compared to their Jewish and Christian counterparts (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar & Abdelhamid, 2015). A review into the British media reporting of Islam and Muslims concluded that the overwhelmingly negative reporting was likely to not only proliferate feelings of insecurity and alienation among British Muslims, but also increase feelings of suspicion among their non-Muslim counterparts (Richardson, 2007). This is likely to be related to the documented rise in anti-Muslim related hate crime, so called Islamaphobia, as well as Islam related social exclusion and isolation (Afshar, Aitkens & Franks, 2006; Moghissi, 2006). While some reported anti-Muslim hate crime often occurs in the aftermath of national or international terrorist events, research has demonstrated that Muslims are often subjected to hostility and decimation which cannot be

correlated to specific terrorist events (Lambert & Githens-Mazer, 2010). Equally, further research has suggested that, alongside the gay and lesbian community, anti-Islamic prejudice is considered more socially acceptable compared to other communities (Abrams & Houston, 2006).

Further to this, media attention often presents a greater focus on the 'practicing' Muslim (Spalek, 2008) with a notable desire to identify Muslims into concise and clear groupings of those who are 'good', 'moderate' or 'extreme' (Mahmood, 2004). The danger of this is that the concept of 'dangerous Muslim' can be internalised into the self-representation of the Muslim community at large (Sartawi & Sammut, 2012). There can also be consequences of Islamaphobic related social exclusion, including on a social, psychological and physical level. There has been research indicating that those who experience social rejection demonstrate brain activation in the same structures that are activated during the experience of physical pain, as well as feelings of lower self-esteem and self-worth (Eisenberger, Lieberman & Williams, 2003; Gunnar, Sebanc, Tout, Donzella & Van Dulmen, 2003; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2004). This is particularly pertinent when we consider this in relation to psychological theories of belonging. It is hypothesised that individuals have a strong, fundamental human motivation to form close, meaningful interpersonal relationships with others, and a lack of such belonging could results in a variety of ill effects (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In this way we can see that by experiencing social rejection, or a lack of belonging, there is a potential negative impact on psychological and physical health and wellbeing.

As a Counselling Psychologist, it is important to consider these issues in relation to the philosophy of the discipline, with its roots in humanistic and existential therapies. At the very core of Counselling Psychology is the belief that, through the therapeutic relationship, as practitioners we are working towards an authentic meeting of our client for the purpose of enhancing the subjective resolve of the individual for the fulfilment of their potential (Strawberry & Woolfe, 2003). This involves a holistic approach, taking into consideration a

developmental view of the client, their life and lifestyle (Strawberry & Woolfe, 2003). In this way, in 'meeting' a British Muslim client experiencing psychological distress, it would be particularly important for the Counselling Psychologist to be able to take a holistic view, and not neglect the socio-political rhetoric surrounding the client and the potential impact of this on the presentation.

1.3. Women and Islam

To discuss feminism within an Islamic discourse often raises eyebrows as the general public often views Islam itself as incapable of recognising women in this way (Badran, 2009), with the symbolic image of a woman in hijab often equated with violence and oppression (Haddad, 2007; Hussain, 2013).

Before we can explore a gendered Islam, it may be useful to consider the way in which gender impacts upon identity development. We can approach this from a feminist position, as this is a theoretical, political and social framework that seeks to end sex or gender based oppression (Hooks, 1997). Similarly, this broad area of research, theory and academia does not intend to benefit women over men, or vice versa, but rather it seeks the power to transform lives in a meaningful way regardless of gender, race or class (Hooks, 1997). Whilst I acknowledge that there are other perspectives available to address the impact of gender on identity development, due to the gendered nature of the research and the perception of gender inequality amongst the Muslim community, I will focus on the feminist positioning.

1.3.1. The feminist perspective

As a social theory feminism is a vast area, and it would be impossible to effectively explore all feminist literature within a single chapter. However, I will bring attention to the particular areas within feminist literature, which I believe will be most relevant to the research I will be presenting, whilst acknowledging the inevitability that much will remain unsaid. Please see the works of Simone de Beauvoir (1948) and Harriet Taylor (1970) for key liberal and

existential feminist texts, and Kemp and Squires (1997) for an overview and further discussion of various feminist theories.

Feminism has evolved over time, with second wave feminism in particular arguing that gender, like other social categories, is imposed on the individual, much like class or racial categorisation (Lorber, 2010). This divides society into two groups; 'men' and 'women', and we act out gendered norms through our interactions with others, thus maintaining this gendered social structure (Lorber, 2010). An example of this would be the concept of male dominance and female passivity, which are often seen as gendered norms in contexts as varying as sexuality and economics (Tong, 1989; Coppock, Haydon & Richter, 1995). For some theorists, the discrepancy between male and female sexuality acts as a foundation for other socially constructed gender inequalities, such that sexuality can be seen as central to male power (MacKinnon, 1982; Bryson, 2016). This is observable in the sexually charged gender stereotypes often attributed to women, such as 'softness', a term which implies the penetrability by that which is hard (MacKinnon, 1982). The centrality of sexuality, and therefore the act of sex itself, can be deconstructed further within the context of this research specifically. The Islamic significance of female sexuality, with virginity as a symbolic representation of purity, will be discussed further within the analysis and discussion chapter. However, within the context of Islamic discourses the importance of female 'purity' underpins much of the gender inequality described, with particular focus on concepts of honour or female reputation. It would be easy to dismiss this as an example of the patriarchal underpinnings of the Islamic faith. However, this would be far too reductionist, and in essence, erroneous as such inequalities exist beyond the Islamic context. For Stanton and Anthony (1981), male sexuality can be seen as a source of degradation to women, specifically noting that all women are united by the fear of rape. Stanton (1981) suggests that the female right to vote, often seen as a landmark in the female rights movement, is inconsequential if one is unable to have absolute right over their body (cited in Bryson, 2016). This is not to dismiss the rape of men which can occur at the hands of other men,

nonetheless, even within current UK law, the legal definition of rape specifies the penetration of a penis (Metropolitan Police, n.d); therefore making this a male crime. From this, we can understand that Stanton was demonstrating that given this most basic of power inequality, subsequent gender based inequalities would follow.

Building upon their second wave predecessors, third wave feminism is often characterised by the celebration and exploration of sexuality (Kinser, 2004; Gillis, Howe & Munford, 2007). This development of the feminist movement acknowledges the successes and importance of feminism but focuses on the celebration of a new form of gender relations (Coppock, Hayden, Richter, 1995: Walby, 2011). However, an open sexualisation of women can be seen as sexually limiting rather than liberating (Walter, 2010). While it may be considered that there has been a reduction in old-fashioned forms of control over female sexuality, new forms of control have undoubtedly replaced this, perhaps through the open access and acceptable use of pornography (Levy, 2006). The very same 'raunch' culture that promises sexual freedoms and liberation ultimately relies on the commercialisation of women as sexual objects (Levy, 2006). Coppock, Haydon and Richter (1995) explored the presentation of female sexuality within popular television shows of the time. They identify the dichotomy of female sexuality into Madonna/whore, good/bad, and passive/immoral, and the presentation of a 'dangerous' female sexuality that exists outside of marriage (Coppock, Haydon & Richter, 1995). Whilst their exploration may be dated, similar research has been recreated with similar results found; finding that exposure to sexualised media content is related to the development of gender stereotypes (see Escobar-Chaves, Tortolero, Markham, Low, Eital & Thickstun, 2005). Research has also investigated this over a variety of different media presentations, with sexually explicit online movies (in the form of pornographic films) being statistically significantly related to beliefs of women as sexual objects (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007).

In considering the relationship between gender and the self, the feminist would view this as a core political issue. Gender rebellion feminists encourage a shift in the focus of feminist

theory from women to the concept of gender. This subsection of feminist literature questions the necessity of the binary concept of gender, and thus its underpinning in women based feminist research and theory (Lorber, 2010). As a prevalent movement since the 1980s, this perspective views gender as a complex social structure that seeks to advantage men while subordinating women, all the while interacting with other racial, ethnic and social class related issues (Lorber, 2010). From the social construction feminist perspective, sex is genetically determined while we grow to become a socially constructed gender through socialisation, gender stereotyping and role learning (Elliott, 2007; Lorber, 2006; 2010). It is argued that this socially constructed gender not only leads to differences in what would be considered 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviours, but this also leads to gender inequality with typically male characteristics being held in higher regard than typically female characteristics in Western societies (Lorber, 2010). This social construction feminism allows us to consider that we are in some way preforming or 'doing' gender. This was explained in the classical work of West and Zimmerman (1987), who explained the way in which this 'doing' of gender in everyday interactions leads to a gendered self-identity and reinforces the masculine dominance as well as the feminine subservience. In essence, by 'doing' gender we in turn 'become' gendered (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Whilst the concept of performing gender may lead one to think that gender, therefore, can be changed, challenged and manipulated, the reality is that the gendered social order is often legitimised through mainstream religion, taught in education institutions and reinforced by popular media (Lorber 2006; 2010). An early example of experiencing gender roles is in childhood, when children are so often taught gender 'appropriate' behaviours and culturally appropriate gender roles (Risman, 2004). This includes the kind of games children are encouraged to play or the kinds of toys they are given to play with. Another key early experience a child has of gender roles is that of mothering and the relationships with patriarchal familial structures. This is reflected in the intense anxiety surrounding motherhood, an entrenched concern within our society, and the concurrent contradictory idealisation and shaming of women in the choices of mothering (Elliott, 2007).

We can extend this further to consider the relationship between feminism and religion, a relationship which can be understood epistemologically as feminism gives us a theory of knowledge and how we know what we do about the legal rights of women; this includes laws that are legitimised through religion (Mir-Hosseini, 2011). There has been a rise in feminism within the Islamic context, legitimised by the Islamic faith itself, since the 1970s (Mir-Hosseini, 2011). Islamic Feminism was originally a term used to refer to a number of Iranian female activists who became dissatisfied with the governmental discourse around women, and chose to join the reform movement of the time (Badran, 2009; Mir-Hosseini, 2011). A number of these key female figures, including Shahla Sherkat and Azam Taleqani went on to found two feminist publications within the Islamic Republic of Iran (Mir-Hosseini, 2011). Whilst I have felt that it is important to acknowledge the presence of Islamic Feminism, I will not be referring to this further on this platform. Islamic feminism, by definition, grounds itself within the tenets of Islam, and I believe that the deconstruction of my data from this lens may be best within another forum.

1.3.2. The hijab

Growing up in Britain may present a multitude of challenges for the young Muslim female. The presentation of the Muslim female is constantly open to interpretation, and the nature of this interpretation has implications for the experience for the female herself and the experience of negative stereotypes of the Muslim figure (Hutnik & Street, 2010). Basit (1997) expands on this, explaining that which may be interpreted by non-Muslims as submissiveness of a Muslim female may be interpreted by the female herself as respectfulness. Equally, the same may occur for the interpretation of the hijab; this can have different meanings for different individuals such that an older South Asian mother may have different motivations and interpretations of the hijab compared to their British born daughter, just as a non-Muslim may have different interpretations of the hijab also (Haddad, 2007).

The word hijab is an Arabic term meaning a barrier or partition, however in the Islamic context the term hijab refers to a philosophy of modesty for both male and female followers of the Islamic faith. The most notable hijab is that of the headscarf or veil often worn by Muslim women to cover their hair, as well as the loose or otherwise modest clothing covering the legs, arms and chest, often making Muslim women overtly identifiable. According to Islamic principle, this hijab must be worn in front of all men whom the woman could theoretically marry, so everyone except the husband, father, brothers, uncles and young children. Men are also encouraged to wear loose clothing and to ensure they are covered from navel to knee. For the purposes of this portfolio, I will be focusing on the female hijab.

The hijab has become a symbolic representation of a politicised Islam, and has been at the centre of many political debates and movements, perhaps most notably starting with the 1989 so called 'headscarf affair' in France (Bloul, 1994). From a feminist perspective, the hijab has been a difficult area of debate due to its religious meaning. Winter (2006) reflects on some of the difficulties that may present for the non-Muslim scholar in the critique of the hijab as a gender marker, whilst also maintaining a mindful respect for choice, acknowledging that a woman may wish to wear the hijab as a marker of identity. Winter (2006) asks; "Can a Western woman criticise the fundamentalist manipulation of the *hijab* in the same way that a woman of Muslim background might be able to?" (p. 97). As I read this text and consider this, I wonder if this is too simplistic; as it seems to reduce the identity of a given woman to either a hijab wearer or a 'Western' woman. This leaves me feeling uncomfortable as a woman who is both British and a Muslim who observes the wearing of the hijab. If I were to engage in a critique of the manipulation of the hijab, or the hijab itself, would this be 'validated' because of the presence of my own hijab or perhaps would I be considered ill-equipped to regard such matters because of my own British, and therefore 'Western', identity?

The hijab is an important point to consider when thinking about British Muslim women's identity. For those that choose to wear it, it is a visible performance of their Muslim identity;

indeed even more so, their identity is 'played' out physically on their body (Werbner, 2004). For some women, the decision to wear the hijab may serve the function of becoming *visibly* Muslim, and thereby consolidating ones Muslim identity as well as their gender identity (Ruby, 2006; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). The intersect between one's gender identity and Muslim identity is important, mainly due to the perception of many non-Muslims that the hijab is symbolically representative of oppression (Ruby, 2006). For some women this is overcome by adapting their scarf wearing to, in some way, communicate her willingness to wear the hijab, often through an expression of one's own fashionable identity (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013).

In reading about the criticisms of the hijab it is difficult maintain a curious mind and neutrality on the subject. I am a Muslim woman who wears a hijab, and reflecting upon my position in relation to this research has been a central aspect of the process. As I have touched upon here, there are many that view the hijab as a symbol of oppression, patriarchy and a religious system that degrades women to be little more than sexual objects. Equally, some interpretations of the hijab centre on female sexuality and the concealment of the female's body - either due to the tempting nature of the female body or the corrupting effect of female sexuality (Ruby, 2006). I have had to hold the tension between being authentic to who I am as a Muslim woman, as well as to who I am as a researcher and practitioner. I have attempted to manage this tension by engaging in reflexivity throughout this research process, and this reflexivity will be a salient feature throughout this portfolio.

1.4. Theories of identity and the self

There are many different theoretical propositions to identity and the self, falling across a number of different disciplines. Broadly speaking, across disciplines, these theories typically focus on intra-psychic, social and group processes. I will be focusing on a small number of self and identity theorists, highlighting the most salient theories. My aim is to take the reader on a journey across the various levels identity, looking at these different components in turn,

acknowledging the literature and its contribution to current research, whilst noting where successive thinking further pushes theoretical understanding. I feel that it would be too restrictive to focus on one area of identity theory in favour of the other, as my research question acknowledges both intra-psychic and group processes, therefore I will start with intra-psychic theories of the self, moving to theories of a relational self, the social self and ending with theories of identity as a product of the group. Unavoidably, there is a wealth of theoretical positions not covered here, such as developmental theories of the self and identity. Please see the works of Erik Erikson (1968) and James Marcia (1966) for further reading on identity development.

As previously discussed, identity is often theorised as a fluid construct that is often posited to be defined in respect to others (Laing, 1960; Howarth, 2002; Reicher, 2004) whilst the psychological formation of the self is often intra-psychic and therefore much more subjective (Elliott, 2007). From this positioning, we can see identity as an association with the social world, often with normative and ideological categories, whilst the self refers to more conflicting and complex internal processes (Venn, 2006). It is important to note that these are not distinct constructs, but rather interrelate with one another. In order to contextualise this study in both the intra-psychic and the social aspects of the research question, I will explore some of the more significant theories of identity development across intra-psychic and group theories.

1.4.1.The intra-psychic self

When considering psychological theories of the intra-psychic or unconscious self, it would seem impossible to exclude the work of Sigmund Freud, who arguably paved the way for conceptualising the self as both fragmented and conflicted (Elliott, 2007). For Freud, the self can be conceptualised into that which is conscious, preconscious and that which is unconscious (Freud, 1923). This formulates the famous Freudian model of the human psyche, known as the tripartite model, of the Id (unconsciousness), Ego (pre-consciousness)

and Superego (consciousness). Loevinger (1976) explains that the Ego is the construct that represents what one is to oneself. As the Id contains the feelings towards oneself, then we can assume that the unconscious elements of the self-concept will be more influential than the conscious elements (as the Id is largely unconscious). This leaves the Ego to mediate between the unconscious self-feelings and the conscious self-evaluations, and thus the role of defining the self (Samuels, 1977).

For Freud, the unconscious realm of the Id serves to contain the repressed desires and fears (Freud, 1923; Lawler, 2014), and this active process of repression begins in childhood and occurs repeatedly throughout life as an essential process for any kind of social organisation (Lawler, 2014). It is through repression that we conceal animalistic instincts that would be unacceptable within our society, such that these instincts are dissolved into the unconscious or they may be expressed in more socially acceptable forms, for example professional boxing may be seen as an acceptable expression of aggression and physical violence (Burkitt, 2008). Whilst Freud's contribution to the study and understanding of the self has been important to the field, there have been significant criticisms, including the lack of consideration of the impact that others may have on the formation of the self (Burkitt, 2008).

1.4.2. The relational self

Jacques Lacan's contribution to this field has helped to overcome some of the criticisms of Freud, to some degree, by incorporating influences outside of the subject. Lacan (1949) explains the profound impact of mirrors and other reflective surfaces (perhaps the mother) upon the developing self of the infant, up until the age of around 18 months. For Lacan (1949), mirrors provide an image of unity and oneness, which Lacan refers to as the ideal-I. However, this mirror image is profoundly flawed and misleading in its imagery; this unified image is wholly conflicting with the child's reality, a reality that consists of motor ineffectiveness and dependence on the parent for the most basic of needs (Lacan, 1949; Elliott, 2007). In this respect, the self is fictitious-defined by an image that does not exist,

consequently leaving the child with the image of a fragmented self (Lacan, 1949; Elliott, 2007). The infant attempts to become this complete and omnipotent mirror image; indeed we may well spend the rest of our lives seeking to fulfil this impossible feat (Craib, 1998). Essentially, the Lacanian theory is one of duality and the relationship between the idealised mirror image and an incongruent reality. The child is able to overcome this incongruence by identifying with the image, a moment which stimulates both jubilation and a depressive reaction (Lacan, 1949). This theory of the self proposed by Lacan gives an account of how something outside of the individual, in this case the mirror, structures the self. The falsified image created by the mirror, the subsequent falsified self and the misrecognition form a basis for subsequent interpersonal relationships (Lacan, 1949; Elliott, 2007).

1.4.3. The social self

Hegel (1977) theorised that consciousness is prevented from being entirely autonomous by the external world and some negotiation must occur; this negotiation process often results in a submission to the 'other' (cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Hall (2004) goes on to explain the implicit role of this relationship with the 'other', explaining that one's self-consciousness "… always exists in relationship to an 'other' or 'others' who serve to validate its existence" (Hall, 2004, p. 51). This contribution signalled an important theoretical shift and paved the way for more recent conceptualisations of the self as having a social component (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

An important contribution to the understanding of the social self is that of Erving Goffman, who presented his dramaturgical metaphor in which one's social identity, and social interactions operate in a typical structure, much like a theatrical performance (Lawler, 2014). Goffman explains his concept of 'regions', most importantly that of the 'front stage' and 'back stage', drawing similarities between life and the theatre stage (Goffman, 1959). When on the 'front stage', individuals are aware of their audience and behave in a way that is consistent with the role that they are fulfilling. Let us consider the example of the Counselling

Psychologist; it is very likely that they would have vastly different behaviours when working therapeutically with a client or patient compared to when they are home with their family. In this respect, Goffman regarded the self as a series of roles that we perform resulting in something which can be observed as 'reality' (Craib, 1998; Lawler, 2014).

<u>1.4.4. Identity as a social product of the group</u>

Identity is an important construct in terms of both individual and social psychology, as identity tends to allow individuals to create a sense of 'us' and 'them' (Allport, 1961) as well as fulfilling a need to belong with others who share a commonality and purpose (Tajfel, 1981). This allows individuals to have a sense of stability and togetherness. When contemplating the construction of identity in relation to others and the group, we can consider the way in which individuals identify with a particular group or groups, and the impact this has on how one understands their own identity - as proposed by Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Fielding, Terry, Masser & Hogg, 2008). More specifically, Tajfel's work focussed on the social and cognitive processes involved in the instigation of group membership as well as the way in which this membership is maintained (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Essentially, for Tajfel, identity exists as an unexpressed and dormant entity, manifesting in the presence of a social context (Tajfel, 1982; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Tajfel and colleagues explored the phenomenon of the 'in-group' and conversely the 'out-group', in essence the concept of 'us' and 'them'. Social Identity Theory, and the associated Social Categorisation Theory explains that group members attempt to maintain a positive group identity, through a process which includes comparisons between in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This self-categorisation occurs cognitively through processes of attribution as well as the activation of pre-existing schemas (Brown, 2000). Fundamentally, identifying with others within the group leads to an increased chance of behaviours which are also in line with the group and often results in a more reductionist perception of the out-group, thus leading to stereotyping and prejudice (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In this way, Social Identity Theory also offers an explanation for social influence, proposing that if one feels a salient connection with

a particular social group, group members are more likely to behave in ways that are in line with the group itself and reinforce group subjective norms and membership (Fielding, Terry, Masser & Hogg, 2008).

Whilst the concept of social identity and the associated theories have been important within the psychosocial field, there have been challenges to the models of the social identity. Whist acknowledging that indeed we may well occupy multiple social identities that we use in order to organise our relationships with others, Craib (1998) criticises the lack of curiosity in the internal negotiation in order to form and maintain these social identities. Craib (1998) would acknowledge that I am a wife, a daughter, a sister and an employee, all of which are socially bound and contextualised. However, if I were to lose one of these identities, I would not have lost *my* identity, and equally to cease being an employee is likely to be far less emotionally painful than if I were to cease being a wife. There is an internal, subjective negotiation of these identities that is not adequately explored with theories of social identity. Further challenges to group identities theories have included Communities of Practice Theory (Lave and Wengers, 1991), which suggests that individuals come together around some common goal or venture. This makes the group more meaningful for those within them, as opposed to an abstract categorisation (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). More radical challenges to group identity theory have also come from poststructuralist contributions, for example Queer Theory and the concept of diaspora (Sedgwick, 1993; Hall, 1995). These theories challenge the concept of dominant identities, in the case of Queer Theory, as well as proposing a representation for those who move between cultures, in the case of diaspora (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

A further important theory of social identity is that of Identity Process Theory (Breakwell, 1986; 1992; 2001). This theory suggests that identity is a dynamic social and psychological process, conceptualised on the dimensions of content and value/ affect, which is in turn regulated by processes absorbing new information about ones identity (assimilation-accommodation) and a process of meaning making based on this (evaluation) (Jaspal &

Breakwell, 2014). These processes are guided by at least four key principles; continuity, distinctiveness, self-efficacy and self esteem (Breakwell, 1986; 1992; 2001). Central to Identity Process Theory is the concept of identity threat; if the social structure changes and results in an obstruction to any of these key principles, then an individual will engage in a coping mechanism to reduce this threat to identity. Identity Process theory provides a possible explanation for the psychological factors involved in the experience of identity threat, as well as the ways in which individuals may respond to having their identities threatened. Therefore, this theory conceptualises both the cognitive and behavioural patterns seen in individuals experiencing such identity threat, as well as allows us to consider the relationships between identity principles (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). As this model seeks to explain the impact of social change upon identity formation (Breakwell, 1986), it has, therefore, been recommended in the study of British Muslims (Jaspal & Cinnarella, 2010). In many ways, Identity Process Theory can be seen as a model that succeeds where others lack, as it acknowledges the various levels of identity, whilst integrating these levels by providing scope to explore intra-psychic, interpersonal and intergroup processes.

1.4.5. The post-modern self

Postmodernism can be understood to be the new social conditions under which we are all now living; a society in which technological advances have become inescapable in everyday life and tasks, and a commodity filled consumer lifestyle fuelled by corporate capitalism is dominant (Elliott, 2007). Bauman (2012) criticises the term postmodernism, suggesting that this implies modernity itself to be over. Rather than this, he suggests that a more appropriate term would be 'liquid modernity', a term he suggests to be more reflective of the present time in which solid human connections are liquefied. Essentially, these very connections become fluid across time and space, and one can find themselves fluidly shifting social positions, spouses and values or more (Bauman, 2012). For Bauman (2012), this is linked to two key changes which have occurred in recent times: globalisation and, connected to this, the loss of connection to set communities. The dichotomous ramifications of this is a self which must

be fluid and ready to adapt and change at a moments notice, whilst also maintaining some stability so that we can be known by others (Burkitt, 2008). Hence, in postmodernity or liquid modernity, the contemporary self can be recognised as being more fragmented, due to the demands upon the self across incompatible positions and practices (Hall, 2000, Elliott, 2007). Essentially, the self can become fragmented into various 'me's', depending on the context or conversation one finds their self in-perhaps in some way reflecting the multiple groups which one affiliates with (Burkitt, 2008; Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005).

1.5. A review of related and relevant literature

This research focuses upon the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslim women. A review of recent and relevant literature was carried out in order to assess research that has previously been published within this area. There has been limited exploration of this specific area, with database searches[1] only identifying 107 articles published over the last 10 years. Due to this paucity of published research, there is a lack of knowledge around the issues of identity negotiation amongst British Muslims. I will start this exploration by discussing research on dual identity before focusing on studies more closely related to my British Muslim research area.

Throughout this literature review, and indeed the remainder of this thesis, I refer to 'conflict' in identity negotiation and formation. This terminology can have multiple meanings and inferences often dependent upon theoretical positioning. For the purposes of this study I use the term 'conflict' to refer to psychological or emotional conflict resulting from opposing concepts or ideas, unless otherwise stated.

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[1] A literature search was carried out using PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO for search criteria 'BRITISH', 'MUSLIM' and 'IDENTITY', limited to articles published since 2006.

1.5.1. Dual Identity

The presence of a fragmented duality in one's identity is observable among many communities in society, and a study in 1987 carried out by Espin looked at a population of 16 lesbian women of Latin background. Espin (1987) reported that whilst participants identified as both Latina and lesbian, they also experienced a fear of stigmatisation based on their sexuality from their ethnic community, as well as lack of support for their ethnic identity from the wider gay community. In order to manage this conflict, individuals negotiated between their ethnic and sexual identity based on which was more tolerable in a given situation (Espin, 1987). Similar to this, more recent studies have looked at lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) participants and the process of forming a LGB identity, specifically in relation to their religious beliefs. Studies have identified a conflict between the religious and sexual identity such that individuals abandon or feel abandoned by their religious belief as they develop this LGB identity (Davidson, 2000; Lease, Horne & Noffsinger-Frazier, 2005; Bartoli & Gillem, 2008). Further to this, the distress experienced in this process can include shame, depression, suicidal ideation and internalised homophobia (Schuck & Liddle, 2001; Lease, Horne & Noffsinger-Frazier, 2005: Schnoor, 2006). Research has indicated that an individual attempting to contain their dual identity, particularly if those identities are perceived to be incompatible, is often forced to adapt and negotiate between the various and relevant cultural demands. This has been particularly demonstrated among the Chinese-American community, with research suggesting an adapting and adopting of behavioral practices depending upon whether the cultural setting they are in is perceived to be more 'Chinese' or more 'American' (Hong, Morris, Chiu & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002).

A more relevant study was also carried out by Sirin, Bikmen, Mir, Fine, Zaal and Katsiaficas (2005), within which they aimed to illuminate the degree to which various factors impacted upon the American Muslim identity of their participants, including gender, discrimination related stress and religiosity. This mixed methods study gathered data from a sample of 97

first and second generation Muslims aged 18-28 years, using measures for identity, acculturation, religiosity, frequency of discrimination, as well as discrimination related stress (Sirin et al. 2005). The findings from this study indicated that the participants identified with the Muslim identity more than their American identity, however they were able to integrate these identities together. Further, through the qualitative process of identity maps, the majority of participants presented experiencing their American and Muslim identities as integrated or parallel in nature with only 10% expressing conflicts between these identities (Sirin et al. 2005). Whilst this study is valuable when thinking about my own research area, on a fundamental level I wonder if a participant pool of both first and second generation Muslim Americans may have an impact on outcomes. Whilst Sirin and colleagues found no difference between country of birth and Muslim and American identification, this lacks depth and contextualisation. Equally, the qualitative element to this study was the drawing of identity maps, for which the instructions referred to 'multiple selves'. This suggests the presence of more than one identity, by the very definition of the terminology used, as opposed to a duality in identity, which would allow one to conceptualise identity as a fluid construct. The impact of language on the way participants were able to reflect on these concepts is difficult to predict, however this is something that is important to consider. Further to this, due to a lack of standardised measures, religiosity was measured using a six-item index relating to the degree of participation within religious activities, such as the participation in religious fasting. While the study reported that higher degrees of religiosity was found to be a significant predictor of identification with Muslim communities, and the measure had a good Chronbach's alpha score (0.79), the measure as described is problematic. There are various instances in which a Muslim may not participate with various religious activities, for example someone with a long-term medical condition for which they needed medication would not fast, equally a menstruating female would not pray. Therefore, this measure becomes questionable. Unfortunately, further information was not given about the exact nature of the items on this measure, however this demonstrates the complexity involved with the measurement of this dimension.

1.5.2. Dual identity and the British Muslim

Research has shown that recognising the duality in their identity is important for many Muslims living in Britain, reflected in the increased likelihood of second and successive generations of Muslims to identify themselves with hyphenated descriptions, such as British-Muslim, rather than focusing more singularly on their national or religious identity (Maxwell, 2006). However, the current prevalent anti-Muslim rhetoric and discrimination can result in some British Muslims feeling that there is an incompatibility between these identities, resulting in an internal conflict in joining their Islamic values and beliefs with the values of the British majority, such that some feel that they must choose one identity in favour of the other (Lambert & Githens-Mazer, 2010; Shibli, 2010; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2012).

A recent quantitative study carried out within a London University with self-identified British Muslim participants, found that increased perception of anti-Muslim discrimination was associated with an increased perception of an incompatibility between their British and Muslim identities as well as an increased rejection of national identity and negative attitude towards non-Muslims (Hutchinson, Lubna, Goncalves-Portelinha, Kamali and Khan, 2015). In order to attempt to delineate causality within this study, rather than rely on correlational results, this research was extended using an experimental manipulation of the perception of anti-Muslim discrimination. Within this study, Hutchinson et al. (2015) asked participants to read a newspaper article attacking Muslims and the Islamic culture, participants were then randomly allocated to one of two experimental conditions; within one condition participants were presented with falsified poll ratings which indicated that the majority of the British public supported the discriminatory views expressed in the article (widespread discrimination condition). Within the second experimental condition the poll results indicated that the majority of the British public rejected the discriminatory views expressed in the article (isolated discrimination condition). Hutchinson and colleagues found that, compared to those in the isolated discrimination condition, participants in the widespread discrimination condition expressed greater identity incompatibility, greater support for Islamic rights groups,

as well as lower national identification and greater negative attitudes towards non- Muslims. Together, these two studies demonstrate the impact of anti-Muslim discrimination and prejudice on the perception of identity compatibility for British Muslims, as well as national identity and attitude towards non-Muslims. This study has been particularly important, as to the best of my knowledge and extensive research, this is the first study to demonstrate within a British Muslim population that when British Muslims feel unable to express their religiosity without experiencing prejudice from the non-Muslim mainstream, they are more likely to perceive an irreconcilability between their Muslim and British identities. This increases their support for Islamic rights groups and negatively impacts their British national identity and their attitude towards the non-Muslim majority (Hutchinson et al. 2015).

Yip (2004) carried out a similarly important qualitative study with non-heterosexual British Muslims. Yip (2004) reported that within the participants' cultural and Islamic communities, homosexuality was considered a 'western' disease and a result of 'Westoxication' - being intoxicated by western culture and society. Hence, for the family and wider community, to disclose one's non-heterosexuality would be in some way to disclose a violation of one's character as well as a violation of religious and cultural purity (Yip, 2004). This positioning of sexuality as between moral purity and religious blasphemy consequently places Muslim non-heterosexuals as uncommitted and even traitors to their religious and cultural heritage and communities. Further Yip (2004) found that of the participants who had 'come out' to family members, most reported that the parental response was to encourage marriage in an effort to 'cure' non-heterosexuality. For those participants who did not disclose their sexuality, this secrecy was a strategy employed to protect the family 'honour' as well as out of fear of family rejection (Yip, 2004). This research is both illuminating and powerful, particularly because of its qualitative nature. Yip (2004) suggests that if both of these conflicting identities, of Muslim and non-heterosexual, can be contained within the self-concept, then each of these identities can be 'activated' as it were, within differing and appropriate social contexts. Whist this is an interesting finding; it lacks the psychological perspective into this complex and intricate

identity negotiation. Similarly, Mythen (2012) examined the process of identity maintenance in a British Pakistani population living within North-West England. Mythen (2012) identified three key processes salient to this - solidity, elasticity and resilience. For this study, participants presented Islam as their principle identity, around which other identities were mediated, and the interconnected processes of solidity, elasticity and resilience served to support this identity. Hence elasticity was utilised to connect local with global faith communities, which in turn solidifies the Islamic identity and consequently increasing resilience to prejudice (Mythen, 2012).

A further notable study carried out by Dwyer (2000), who focused on the concept of diasporic identities among young British South Asian Muslim women. Dwyer concerns her research with the identity negotiation of this population, citing Hall (1992) that diasporic identities must live in a constant state translation, as individuals must learn two (or more) cultures, languages and identities. Dwyer held group discussions as well as interviews with 49 participants, although unfortunately it was not reported how these interviews were analysed. Dwyer (2000) discusses the gender implications of negotiating between the diasporic identities, including cultural expectations of gender roles and gender ideals, acknowledging that this is in contradiction to the concept of diaspora, which focuses on cultural translation whilst rejecting discourses of cultural purity. For Dwyer (2000) this gendered expectation of the young women interviewed positioned them as custodians of both cultural and religious integrity for the community. Interestingly, some of the narratives quoted demonstrated that this was more than just a familial expectation, but rather some of the young people interviewed expressed their concern over their future children and grandchildren and their responsibility as future mothers to maintain their parental culture and religion (Dwyer, 2000).

Hopkins (2011) also carried out research on the dual identity negotiation of British Muslims, using a thematic analysis to analyse interviews with 28 participants. Unfortunately, there is no further detail about the demographic data of these participants, for example if they are second or third generation British of non-British parentage, themselves migrants to the UK or

otherwise, or indeed the age range of participants. While the absence of this data may be for the purposes of recognising the participant homogeneity based of their British Muslim dual-identification, nonetheless it does make it difficult to contextualise the findings. Hopkins (2011) details the participants' British and Muslim group relationships and their desire to contribute towards Britain as Muslims. It was suggested that this intergroup harmony could be achieved if there is the perception of a 'common team', i.e. Britain and its interests, perhaps in line with the Communities of Practice Theory (Lave & Wengers, 1991).

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010b) were interested in the experiences of British Pakistani men who identified as both Muslim and gay, and how they understood and defined their sexual, religious and ethnic identities. They interviewed 12 British-born Muslim gay men of Pakistani background, focusing on identity negotiation and formation as well as the coping strategies employed when under identity threat. A thematic analysis of interview transcripts identified four superordinate themes; attempts to make sense of one's gay sexual identity, citing religious discourses to explain ones sexuality, and expression of fear of divine reckoning and British national identity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b). Perhaps more salient to the present research, the participants seemed to be on a journey for psychological coherence between identities, and as such employed various strategies in an attempt to reconcile these, particularly when under threat. In this study, participants reported invoking their British national identity in order to manage identity threat, as well as revising their sexual identity in behavioural terms - something they *do* rather than who they *are* (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b). Although this study brings attention to a different aspects of the British Muslim identity, it also highlights concepts which may be of interest for those who experience conflicting identities, and how one may employ coping strategies in order to negotiate these. However, it is relevant to note that the research participants were interviewed by a non-academic British Pakistani gay man who was known by many of the participants through their extended social network. From an ethical position, I wonder how being interviewed about such a sensitive

topic by someone known to the participant may have impacted their responses, and what they chose to share or not share.

From this, we can see that identity negotiation is a particularly intricate and complex internal, and at times external, psychological and relational process. For the British Muslim population I feel that this is a particularly important process to keep in mind, from a therapeutic perspective. Clinically, I currently work in an HIV and sexual health service, and I have often been struck by the way in which mental and physical health professionals can seemingly forget this aspect of one's life. I have often found that it can be easy to see British Muslim services users as either British or Muslim, often based on the extent to which one is physically identifiable as Muslim. So a Muslim woman in hijab or other Islamic dress often raises eyebrows at her very presence in a sexual health service, and in a similar way the Islamic identity of a Muslim young adult is often neglected in the psychological formulation. As Counselling Psychologists, the very nature of our work is that of psychological distress, and it is important to consider all aspects of the person in order to effectively address this with our client.

1.6. Reflections on the previous research

The research I have presented here is just some of the studies that I have found looking at dual identity and dual identity within the British Muslim population. The studies discussed come from a range of academic disciplines including Social Psychology, Sociology, Womens' Studies and Political Psychology. I note a distinct lack of the Counselling Psychology perspective. Methodologically, the studies reviewed vary in terms of design, with both qualitative and quantitative contributions to the knowledgebase. Unfortunately, many published studies lack clarity on the method of data analysis, where this is available, many studies use thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a well-established qualitative methodology, however it is often criticised due to its lack of clear theoretical underpinning and the dangers of engaging in this analysis without appropriate theoretical or

epistemological orientation (Willig, 2013). Equally, due to the deductive nature of thematic analysis, some argue that it has the potential to limit any new insights emerging from the data, and may very well lack the depth required for it to be considered a qualitative methodology at all (Willig, 2013).

Equally, over the course of my literature search, I have found only one study, which focuses exclusively on females with participants aged 16-18 years, carried out over 16 years ago (Dwyer, 2000). Based on the very current changing nature of the perception of Muslims, in the UK and abroad, I am struck by the lack of in-depth understanding that we have on the female voice, and excited by the contribution of a study based in the philosophy of Counselling Psychology could make.

1.7. Justification for the research and the contribution to Counselling Psychology

A major part of our work as Counselling Psychologists is to work with individuals on issues around intra-psychic distress, difficulties and conflict. There is pre-existing research about the acculturation process for individuals moving to the UK from other countries and communities, including those of Islamic background (Phalet, Gijsberts, & Hagendoorn, 2008; Connor, 2010; Van Tubergen & Sindradottir, 2011; Güngör, Fleischmann, Phalet & Maliepaard, 2013). On a political level, unlike their immigrant parents, UK born Muslims are a population which are more politicised than their parents, perhaps in part due to transformative global events such as 9/11 (Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007; Edmunds, 2010). As I have presented in this chapter, from a societal perspective, arguably, the fundamentals of Islam are often portrayed in a negative fashion, such that they can be perceived and experienced as juxtaposed to the fundamental values of being British (Mahmood, 2004; Sartawi & Sammut, 2012). Recent incidents of 'Islamic terrorism', whereby British Muslims have taken the decision to become so called 'suicide bombers' or otherwise engage in some variations of 'Holy war' in the name of their religious ideologies, in many ways further stimulates the position that one's commitment to Islam is in some way

fundamentally at tension with, and prioritised over, one's national identity as British (Song, 2012).

The experience of social separateness, which may be present for British Muslims following recent national and international events, is not a unique phenomenon, and we have witnessed this process among other populations in society, such as the Afro-Caribbean and homosexual populations. Research into these groups has demonstrated that, social marginalisation can affect psychological distress, and in fact mental health can be directly impacted by socially related exclusion (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne & Marin, 2001). The unique position that we may find ourselves in now is that the political and social issues around 'Islam' are very current, such that the long term consequences may well be seen within mental health services in years to come. The findings of this research are relevant and valuable to the Counselling Psychology community as the knowledgebase produced will enrich our understanding of a growing population in terms of their internal psychological processes, such that we may be able to consider ways in which we could review services now in order to work in a proactive way. Further to this, the implications of this research would help enrich clinical practice, as this community is growing and this is likely to be reflected in clinical practice, as well as enriching conceptual understanding of issues around identity negotiation.

During the writing of this research I have asked myself what do I hope to achieve, and hence what do I wish to contribute. Whilst I wholeheartedly believe in the above assertions, that this research is important to the academic and clinical discipline of Counselling Psychology, I also believe the impact of this research could also go beyond this. Perhaps in part it is due to my training as a Counselling Psychologist that I concern myself with trying to understand others, and as a female British Muslim I observe a distinct lack of the female voice in the national and international rhetorical about the very communities to which I belong. With this research I hope to challenge, as a society, how we see each other, more specifically I hope to give a voice to a group of women who so often have none.

This chapter aims to give the reader an in-depth account of the research process, as presented in this study. I will begin by explaining the research question and aims followed by a detailed account of the research strategy and the chosen methodology. I then present an evaluation of the methodology, including methodological reflexivity and an exploration of some of the methodological challenges I had to overcome.

2.1. Research question and aims

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand how the two worlds of 'Britishness' and 'Muslim' interact within a female population. The study aims to investigate how women of Islamic faith who have been born and raised in London contain and negotiate, on an intra-psychic level, the dual identities of being both Muslim and British within the current political rhetoric and climate. More specifically, my research is interested in the way in which British Muslim women describe and understand these identities and how they interact. Further to this, the study aims to contextualise this within cultural and socio-political climates. These aims are achieved through the analysis of narrative accounts about their lives. The research positions these identities in a particular way, conceptualising the identities under investigation as 'British' and 'Muslim woman'. This is not to negate womanhood as an identity, however the research is concerned with the negotiation between the British and Muslim woman identities as a dyad, as opposed to the triangulation of 'British', 'Muslim' and 'Woman'.

2.2. A qualitative approach

As I have explained previously, I am primarily interested in exploring the understanding and experience of a population (British born Muslim women) in relation to a particular concept (negotiation of this dual identity). Ashworth (2008) explains that, particularly within modern-

day psychological research, investigations focusing on experience, construction and interpretation can often leave researchers with a sense of unavoidability in adopting a qualitative approach. When understanding qualitative research, according to Langdridge (2007), we can understand that this approach is concerned with "…the naturalistic description or interpretation of phenomena in terms of the meaning these have for the people experiencing them" (p. 2). Qualitative methodologies highlight these lived experiences, allowing for non-observable processes to be studied, and resulting in a co-constructed observation between researcher and participant (Kasket, 2013). This is opposed to the nature of quantitative methodologies, which tend to focus on 'how much' of a phenomenon may exist (Langdridge, 2007). Qualitative research allows for the illumination of meaning and the process of sense making for the target population (Larkin, 2015), within a particular context (Madill, Jordan and Shirley, 2000).

Over recent years, we have seen qualitative approaches become more popular within mainstream psychological research (Willig, 2008). Broadly speaking, qualitative methodologies can be described as being more naturalistic and interpretative in their approach, concerned with an exploration of the given phenomenon and foregrounding the perspectives of those individuals participating in the research (Flick, 2009; Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014). Based upon this, we can see that these methodologies are often particularly well suited to Counselling Psychology research, as their underlying philosophies are closely related (Morrow, 2005). This understanding led me to decide to adopt a qualitative approach for this piece of research. The qualitative nature of the research allows for richer data to be collected and also allows for the kind of exploring which I sought to undertake. In order to access such rich data around a specific topic I carried out one to one semi-structured interviews. Langdridge (2007) explained that semi-structured interviews allow both the flexibility and consistency that is necessary in qualitative research. The use of prompts allows for consistency between interviews while also helping to stimulate the

maximum material from the participant (Langdridge, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Willig, 2013).

I considered a number of different research methodologies in the design of this study, as I felt that the research area could be approached in a number of different ways. As a Counselling Psychologist trainee, just as I approach my clinical work from a pluralistic position, seeking to understand each client as unique in their experiences and tailoring my therapeutic interventions based on the clients particular context, it was equally important to approach research from a position of methodological pluralism (Kasket, 2013). This led me to pay careful consideration to what aspect of the subject area I wished to illuminate, as different research methodologies foreground different views and priorities (Larkin, 2015). Based on this, I chose to conduct this research utilising a narrative methodology, as I felt this approach best attended to the research aims. I will explore this in more depth in latter sections of this chapter.

2.3. Epistemology

As a researcher and scientist practitioner, it is important to critically consider my epistemological position, as this frames the way we understand and think of the knowledge we produce in research (Riley & Reason, 2015). Qualitative research can be conducted from the epistemological framework of realist, phenomenological or social constructionist. This research aims to access the idiographic, intra-psychic negotiation of identity within the participating individuals, while assuming that the experience of these internal worlds is shaped and influenced by external social constructs, institutions and pressures. This lends itself to a social constructionist epistemological stance (Crotty, 1998), as it suggests that subjective reality exists through a process of communication with others (Eatough & Smith, 2008). However, I feel unable to fully commit to this social constructionist paradigm, as this position stipulates that all knowledge is negotiated by social conditions, thereby assuming

that the world we experience is primarily a product of social processes (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999; Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2013).

The social constructionist epistemological framework can vary from radical to more moderation positions. Radical social constructionism opposes the assumption that what exists in the world is exactly what we observe to exist (Burr, 2003). In this way, this position it is not concerned with an objective reality, rejecting that our knowledge is a direct reflection of reality (Burr, 2003); rather it favours being concerned with the particular reality constructed for the specific purpose of that particular conversation (Willig, 2012). More moderate social constructionist approaches allows for the inclusion of something outside of the text, allowing for a pre-existing reality which impacts the way in which individuals create meaning within particular contexts (Willig, 2012). Therefore, as I propose that identity is negotiated, in part, in relation to narratives told and re-told within broader social institutions, this study acknowledges a moderate social constructionist position. However, I seek to access the intra-psychic world of the participants, thereby assuming that an internal world does exist and is accessible by appropriate research techniques. To assume that the internal world exists, and to accept the experience of a subjective reality (Bhaskar, 2013) that is mediated by social and cultural contexts and meanings (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015), gives this research a critical realist texture.

The critical realist accepts the existence of a reality, but questions to what extent researcher observations can truly reflect this reality (Howitt, 2013). This sits well with how I conceptualise my role as a researcher, as someone who is directly connected with the analysis and the data generated (Willig, 2008). This position also emphasises the role of individual agency and the causal effects one can have on their world, complementing the beliefs of Counselling Psychology and the role of agency in therapeutic intervention. Similarly, the critical realist perspective fits well with the discursive foundations of narrative methodologies, as it acknowledges that individuals use the social and personal discourses available to them in order to create meaning in their version of reality (Clarke, Braun &

Hayfield, 2015). While narrative methodologies have their roots within the social constructionist paradigm, and thus a more relativist position, there has been recognition of the need for a shift within the paradigm for a view inclusive of the inner world of the individual. The tension between relativist and realist positions is best overcome by viewing these on a continuum rather than binary opposites. Realism tells us that there is a subjective, external reality that exists independent of ones understanding of it. Conversely, relativism tells us that reality is constructed based on our beliefs and understandings of it, such that external reality does not exist independent of these understandings (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014). Thus, this study is positioned between relativist and realist ontological positions; the subjective experience is real and exists yet this is dependent upon social and historical context for each individual thus allowing for objective meaning.

Therefore, this research occupies a critical realist epistemological position whilst acknowledging a moderate social constructionist perspective. The critical realist perspective acknowledges the subjective construction of narratives, influenced by both individual agency as well as external processes. The moderate social constructionist stance proposes that socio-cultural processes are central to how we understand our experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Narrative methodologies are well suited to this, as they allow the exploration of internal world experiences, as well as the socio-cultural contexts that influence and shape this (Hiles & Cermak, 2008). The linking of these epistemological positions complements the objectives of the research, as well as that of narrative research, and moves to a realist social constructionism (Elder-Vass, 2012)

2.4. Choosing a Narrative Methodology

There are various methods of analysis in qualitative research and each methodology will illuminate a given phenomenon differently, foregrounding a different aspect of the phenomenon as the priority of the research. Two methodologies initially considered, and later discarded, were Interpretative Phenonemological Analysis (IPA) and Discourse Analysis

(DA). IPA is a phenomenological method of data analysis that aims to explore participants' experiences and how they make sense of their lived experiences (Eatough & Smith, 2008), whereas DA is built upon the founding principle that language is involved in the construction of social reality and the achieving of social objectives (Willig, 2013). I decided to discard both IPA and DA approaches, for a number of reasons. The aim of this research was to explore the ways in which British born Muslim women negotiate their dual identity, to examine these identities and their interactions. DA would be an inappropriate methodology for this research question, as DA approaches would challenge attributing subjective or intra-psychic experience to participants. The decision to discard IPA involved more careful consideration of this particular method of analysis in comparison to narrative methodologies. As with many qualitative methodologies, there is significant overlap between IPA and narrative methodologies, noted in the phenomenological underpinning in narrative methodologies (Langdridge, 2007), as well as the reference to narratives in IPA (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). However, there are important points of divergence, grounded in the type of research question each methodology addresses. Phenomenological methodologies, including IPA, are interested in the *experience* of the phenomenon under research (Willig, 2013); whereas narrative methodologies tend to be interested in the way in which individuals make sense of an experience through the narratives told. Therefore, within this research I am interested in understanding the intra-psychic negotiation between dual identities within the current socio-political context, and not just the experience of a phenomenon on an individual level. Based on this, I felt that IPA would not be a sufficient method of data analysis for this research, and therefore felt that the most appropriate methodology would be that of narrative analysis.

Narrative methodologies allow for the representation of ones subjectivity, actions and experience as being shaped by the framework of the social world (Goodbody & Burns, 2011). According to various narrative theorists, as human beings we are born into a world of narratives and our lives are made up of the creation and exchange of stories in everyday social interactions (Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Sarbin, 1986; Murray, 1999; Gubrium &

Holstein, 2012). For Sarbin, narratives not only allow us a way of looking into our world, but rather they inherently construct our world, thus from this perspective we can conclude that narratives have ontological status (cited in, Heaven, 1999). Narrative approaches can be understood as focusing on the way in which existence is experienced, understood and interpreted at the individual level (Crossley, 2000). They recognise that our experience of objects and subjects is indistinguishably related to the linguistic resources available within an individuals cultural experience (Crossley, 2000), and narrative structures often focus on the storyteller from a personal perspective (Atkinson, 1997; Reissman, 2008a; Sutherland, Breen & Lewis, 2013).

There has been debate as to what constitutes a narrative (Reissman, 1993) and it has been suggested that a narrative is a set of events, which are inferred to be linked, and involves attributing to the characters a sense of power (Murray, 2015). Whilst alternatively, Emerson and Frosh (2004) suggest that a narrative is as simple as an account that has a beginning, middle and end. This construction of the narrative, with its three-pronged structure, is considered to have a particular quality in our world. According to Becker (1999), just as the triangle is enclosed and finished, as it were, the three-pronged narrative provides an assimilated account of an experience. This is unlike the open-ended nature of a discourse (which in this illustration, may be likened to a straight line). The full dimensions of the narrative may not be present within all interactions, and rather some narratives may exist with the absence of an ending. Within these situations, it is for the audience to complete the narrative (Murray, 2015).

The role of narratives can be understood as an element of a meaning making process, allowing for sense making within a world of chaos (McLeod, 2001; Willig, 2013; Murray, 2015). In essence, narratives allow for the ordering of events over time, locating these within a historical and cultural context, thus affording meaning at the individual level. This allows the individual to understand both themselves and others, within the context of their world (McAdams 1993). From this, we can see stories as a way that we communicate to ourselves

and others, the answer to the question "who am I" (Polkinghorne, 1991; Bamberg, 2011), located within a particular time. Narratives often occur in the disjointed world, particularly when there is a separation between the ideal and the reality (Bruner, 1990; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002), as they allow the individual to make sense of this disparity. Ricoeur (1984) explains that narratives play a particularly important role in making sense of an ever-changing world, thus making narratives a primary method of restoring order to this ever changing world (Murray, 2015). We can see this with the politically important role that narratives can have, such as in liberation movements of marginalised groups, during which these groups are able to voice their stories of discrimination, inequality and marginalisation (Chase, 2005; Reissman, 2008a). Crossley (2000) emphasises the relationship between narratives and morality, noting that we understand who we are "…through a sense of where we stand in relation to the good" (p. 533). As the perception of good is informed by our social context (Taylor, 2007), narratives allow us to not only understand the disparity or oppression within society but also allow us to position ourselves in relation to the oppressors or the oppressed.

It has been shown that the choice of narrative an individual recalls and retells can be particularly relevant in the construction, and indeed the preservation, of one's identity; such that, one can have many different narrative identities dependent upon social relationships and circumstance (McAdams, 1993; Hiles & Cermak, 2008; Willig, 2013). Hence, while we may consider the narrator as an individual, and their narration as an expression of their narrative identities, there are also narratives that communities may tell about themselves and their histories (Murray, 2015). Narratives do not exist within a void, instead they can be understood as being shaped and influenced by the particular social context within which they are situated (Murray, 2015). Thus, the purpose of studying or researching these narratives is to attempt to understand the meaning of the narrative constructions within their social context (Willig, 2008; Murray, 2015). In this way, Murray (2015) explains that there are narratives that a community may convey about itself and these social narratives interact and overlap with individual narratives, in as much as they allow the individual to define him or herself as

existing within the group. From this, we can see how this kind of analysis can lend itself well to the research question I wish to engage with.

2.4.1. Introducing Critical Narrative Analysis

The qualitative researcher wishing to engage in a narrative methodology is presented with a large volume of research, yet a distinct lack of clarity and consensus on how this research should be conducted. I struggled with this, as I was aware that my research topic was not only sensitive, but also referred to politicised issues. I am interested in the participants' internal processes, such as meaning making and identity, whilst also being concerned with the impact of social and cultural contexts. As a nearly qualified Counselling Psychologist, I am intuitively interested in the co-construction of narratives and the psychological functions these serve. In my search for a suitable approach, I was directed to the work of Darren Langdridge and his version of Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA), a methodology that allows us to illuminate the way in which individuals formulate their 'selves' within continuous social interactions (Forgas, 2002). This methodology lends itself well to research with a politicised focus, as the analytic strategy itself instructs the researcher to engage with relevant political discourses and critical social theory. Similarly, CNA lends itself to contextualising narratives within social and cultural contexts as it sees narratives as a threading together of both the personal (micro) and the social (macro). Therefore, an analysis that does not account for the macro essentially constitutes an incomplete analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014). This dovetails well with my aims as a researcher, to embed the research with the social context, but also with Counselling Psychology's commitment to engage with an individual's subjectivity by viewing a phenomenon within context (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2006).

Langdridge (2007) developed CNA by building upon phenomenology principles, whilst employing hermeneutic theory. Phenomenology was originally established by the philosopher Edmund Husserl in the twentieth century and is concerned with the "…way in which things appear to us in experience…" (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 180). In essence,

phenomenology argues that life is inherently experiential in nature, and thus this position is concerned with the way in which individuals experience life as they engage with the world (Willig, 2013). Hermeneutics is a theory of text interpretation, and Langdridge uses these principles to analyse the text using "…aspects of social theory as a hermeneutic of suspicion…" (2007, p. 130). This step distinguishes CNA from other narrative methodologies and aims to interrogate the text from the position of the narrator as well as the researcher, as Langdridge (2007) positions that we are "...socially, culturally and politically situated and contingent" (p. 139). I will discuss the specific stages of CNA later on in this chapter.

2.5. Recruitment

The recruitment of the participant sample is an aspect of the research that I had to pay careful consideration to, as it was important to try to avoid opportunistic sampling strategies and attempt to recruit participants who illuminated the social world and phenomena with which the research is concerned (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The research question is specifically focused on British born Muslim women within London. Therefore, I limited my sampling methods to women who live or work within London, as it could be presumed that this group would be most attuned with the geographical context within which the study was grounded. The recruitment criteria for the research was that participants had to be female, aged over 18 years, born in the UK, living in London, identify themselves as both British and Muslim, and fluent in spoken English as it was important that participants were able to articulate their story for the purposes of analysis.

Initial recruitment of participants was through purposive sampling (Silverman, 2010; Willig, 2013), although this was extended as the research evolved and narrowed in its focus during the process of interviewing participants (I will discuss in this more depth within the challenges section of this chapter). I contacted three London Universities, and subsequently gained ethical approval from two of these institutions; so I was able to advertise for participants from City University of London and St Georges University of London (please see appendix A and

B). In an attempt to increase my recruitment pool I extended to my own network using snowball sampling, asking if my own social network knew of people who would be interested in taking part. I did this via email, requesting that my email information was passed onwards, therefore providing a layer of anonymity for participants compared to direct referral. I also decided to attempt to recruit from non-academic institutions. There are hundreds of mosques and Islamic centres across London, so I initially contacted three major Islamic centres serving the London community via email (appendix C). I followed up all emails with a telephone call where possible but, unfortunately, I was unable to get through to the relevant persons. As I received no response from these centres, I expanded my list of potential recruitment sites and contacted a further six mosques, Islamic centres and community organisations. Unfortunately, these attempts at recruiting from these sites were fruitless. I will discuss this further during later stages of this chapter.

On a political stage and in national rhetoric, Muslims are often presented as a homogeneous group, with no real account taken of the possible different ethnic, regional and linguistic backgrounds of this population and indeed at which stage individuals 'became' Muslim (Naber, 2000; Kundnani, 2007). However, research has demonstrated that second generation British Muslims may be less concerned with the specifics of their ethic origin, such as whether they are Indian or Pakistani, and these particulars are less central compared to their immigrant parents (Jacobson, 1997b; Kibria, 2008). Therefore, despite the challenges and unsuccessful experiences I had with recruiting from non-academic settings, by defining my sample's homogeneity based on gender and location, I believe that I allowed for cultural diversity within the Muslim group, including allowing for those who may have converted to Islam.

Sample size with qualitative methodologies is a contentious issue, with very little concrete guidance due to the variability of analysis within the qualitative field. This is particularly the case for narrative methodologies, which has a distinct lack of sample size guidance. Creswell (2013) suggests that for narrative methodologies a sample of two or three participants could

be satisfactory, although fails to specify if this sample size would be satisfactory for doctoral level narrative research. Langdrige (2007) suggests that due to the focus on understanding the life story and the complex and time consuming process of analysis, CNA is ideal for (although not limited to) case study investigations. Therefore, small sample sizes are often most appropriate for CNA due to the extended narrative accounts of participants, and the depth at which CNA must occur. Based on this, I recruited a total of six participants, five of whom are presented as part of this study. This sample size is in line with previous doctoral level CNA research (Rizopoulos, 2015), and was felt to be appropriate for this research based on the nature of the study and the different recruitment strategies employed.

2.5.1. Interviewees

I interviewed a total of five females, and I conducted one pilot interview and a reflexive interview that was used to finalise the interview questions (reflexive and pilot interview will be discussed elsewhere). All participants interviewed for this research were asked demographic information; this included their age, parental country of origin, marital status, employment status, highest education level, educational level of their parents, and number of siblings and children. A brief biographical summary is given within the analysis chapter for each participant. Participants ranged in age from 21 years to 45 years, from various ethnic backgrounds including Arabic, African and Asian, although all were born within the UK and lived in London. Participants ranged in their educational achievements and employment status, with highest academic qualification ranging from GCSE equivalent to Masters level. Three of the women interviewed were in full time employment, one was unemployed and a full time student and another was unemployed but actively involved in voluntary work. All participants had siblings and one participant had children of her own.

2.5.2. Pre-Interview

Participants contacted me via email, either after seeing the recruitment posters or hearing about the research through a third party. I responded to participants via email and offered a

telephone call to discuss the research, or offered to send a brief explanation of the study, which all participants consented to. This email gave an outline of the research, and gave the opportunity for participants to ask any questions. I then told participants that I would be in email contact in seven days time, in order to allow time to consider if they still wished to participate in the research. At this follow up email, I checked if participants were still agreeable to take part in the study and I offered an information sheet that could be sent via email prior to attending for the interviewing, although all declined this option opting to read this on the day of the interview. All interviews took place within three to five weeks of initial contact, depending upon participant, researcher and interview room availability.

2.5.3. Interview setting

All interviews took place within a booked room within either St Georges University of London or City University of London, depending on what was convenient for the participant and room availability. These settings were used as they allowed for physical and psychological safety (King & Horrocks, 2010), and also to provide neutral a space that is not religiously charged (for example, as a mosque may be). It was important to consider my own safety as a researcher, and a range of safety measures were employed in order to try and ensure researcher safety. This included carrying a charged mobile telephone and informing someone of the time and place of the interview and ensuring that I contacted this person (by telephone call) after the interview was completed. This telephone number was used only for the research; therefore I was able to keep this on my person during the interview without fear that I would receive an unexpected call. My contact was aware to expect a telephone call post interview, such that not receiving a call from me at the expected time would have had consequences (Ingham, Vanwesenbeek & Kirkland, 2000; King & Horrocks, 2010). Also, by booking a room at either University site, there was the added security that security/university personnel were aware of my location and for what duration I was expected to be within the interview room. The strategies mentioned here were an attempt to ensure my physical safety as a researcher, however I would like to also highlight the importance of psychological

safety. It is important to note that this particular research topic is one that is very close to me on a personal level, and this is something I will further discuss at numerous points of this thesis. I was aware that during the course of interviews I might learn about experiences that may be distressing to me on a personal level. It was important that I had the resources to discuss any distressing or difficult interviews, while maintaining participant confidentiality and anonymity. Although at no point did I feel psychological or emotionally distressed by the interviews, I maintained regular contact with my research supervisor, with whom I felt able to share such difficulties, as well also continuing to engage in my own personal therapy throughout the course of my research process.

Interviews were audio recorded in order to allow for accurate transcription at a later date, these recordings were done using an encrypted recorder and stored in a locked cabinet before they were transferred onto a password encrypted computer and stored in a password protected file. This is in keeping with the British Psychological Society guidelines for research and ethics to protect the participants' confidentiality (British Psychological Society, 2009; 2010). Similar to this, during the analysis process all participants were be allocated an alphabetical code in order to ensure no individual was identifiable, before given a pseudonym for the purposes of write up (British Psychological Society, 2010).

2.5.5. Data storage

I transcribed all digital recordings verbatim using Microsoft Word. Audio files were stored on a password-protected external hard-drive as well as on a password protected personal laptop. Electronic versions of interview transcripts were stored on an external hard-drive and personal laptop also under password protection. Hard copies of the transcripts were stored within a locked cabinet within my home, to which only I had the key. Data was stored for the duration of the research, and confidentially destroyed after the completion of the research.

As I have previously mentioned, I accessed narratives through a topic focused semi-structured interview (Hiles & Cermak, 2008). There are various ways in which one could design the semi-structured interview, and the focus of this can range from the very specific to particularly broad. I was guided by the work of a number of researchers and opted for a loose interview style (McAdams, 1993; Reissman, 1993; Crossley, 2000) focusing on a few particular aspects of the individuals' life. As I was a novice qualitative researcher I conducted a pilot interview with a personal acquaintance in order to finalise my interview schedule, identifying the best questions to ask as well to trying to identify any potential challenges that I may face (Willig, 2013). As this pilot interviewee held the Christian faith, I did this by verbally substituting the word 'Christian' for the word 'Muslim' within the interview schedule. I used the feedback of this in conjunction with the suggestions of McAdams (1993) and Reissman (1993) in order to finalise a semi-structured interview schedule (appendix D). Interview questions were designed to encourage participants to share their stories about specific as well as broader events and themes. The interview schedule is just one tool used by the qualitative researcher in interviewing, the researcher themselves are another important tool, and I feel that my training as a Counselling Psychologist was invaluable in this. Yeo, Legard, Keegan, Ward, McNaughton Nicholls and Lewis (2014) suggest that active listening is a fundamental skill in interviewing (as it is in therapeutic practice) as it allows for researcher to pay attention to the subtext of the narratives as well as listening out for the nuances in the stories told (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I aimed to create a non-judgemental environment for all participants in which they felt confortable to openly speak with me about personal issues. I recognised the importance of achieving a good rapport with my participants in order it facilitate an environment in which participants could speak freely (Crossley, 2000; Yeo et al. 2014). I feel that I was successful in doing this based on the skills I have developed over the course of my training, as well as my professional experience working within Sexual Health and HIV. Working within a Sexual Health and HIV service one

learns to convey a sense of calmness in response to whatever is said to you and a confidence that invariably communicates a sense of comfort in the other.

Prior to the interviews starting, all participants were given an information sheet (appendix E) and asked if they had any questions that they wished to ask. They were then presented with a consent form, which they were asked to read and sign, of which they kept a copy (appendix F). I explained to the participants that the interview was part of a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology portfolio, and that the interview would be digitally recorded. Participants were again asked if they agreed to this, and reminded that the interview could be stopped at any time if they wished to withdraw from the research. I clarified to participants that if they felt uncomfortable with any questions, or felt they no longer wished to be recorded then we could stop the interview and turn off the audio recorder at any time. I carried out these steps in order to facilitate a sense of ownership over the interview data (Grinyer, 2002).

Interviews ranged between 37 and 75 minutes, and towards the end of the interview I gave each participant advanced notice that we were coming towards the end. This encouraged participants to raise anything that they have not yet raised, as well as prepared participants to return to a level of 'normal' social interaction (Yeo et al, 2014). After the interview, I thanked each participant for their time, switched off the digital recorder and gave them a debrief form (appendix G). I then asked participants how they found the interview, all responded that they had enjoyed it, with some reflecting that it had made them think of things that they had not previously considered.

2.7. Analytic process

CNA outlines six stages of analysis, none of which distinct from the other, as the purpose of the stages is to equip the researcher with tools to examine the data in light of the phenomena under investigation (Langdridge, 2007). Langdridge (2007) acknowledges the demanding nature of the CNA model, and recognises that an abbreviated version of this methodology

may be both valid and appropriate. Please see Langdridge (2007) for further details of the standardised CNA model.

Below is an outline of the stages of analysis as I applied them, with an explanation of each stage. All interview transcripts were printed single sided on A4 paper, triple spaced to allow space for note taking, see appendix H for a sample. Notes were kept during the process of analysis within a reflexive journal, and I referred to these during write up. Prior to starting each analysis, I re-listened to the audio recording of the interview and re-read the interview transcript in order to familiarise myself with the data, the context and the body of the interview as a whole.

Stage 1: A critique of the illusions of subjectivity

Here, Langdridge (2007) suggests that the researcher must subject themselves to hermeneutic critique thus allowing the researcher to open themselves to their own preconceived perceptions of the world and the topic area. At the start of analysis for each transcript I entered into a period of reflective engagement, consciously acknowledging what the research topic meant on a personal level, and how my previous experiences and beliefs may impact upon the text as well as the process of analysis. I kept notes within a separate journal, which I came back to throughout the analysis and write up phase.

Stage 2: Identify narratives, narrative tones and rhetorical function

The next stage of the analysis involves identifying the narratives within the data. I started off by looking for the main narratives within the text, noting shifts in content and tone. It is suggested that there is likely to be one main narrative bound by the aims of the research (Langdridge, 2007), and I worked through each transcript looking for the main narrative and writing this in one or two sentences. I then went back over each interview focusing on the overall tone, noting specific sentences and moments when the tone shifts. By doing this while listening to the audio recording of the interview I was also able to recall changes in

non-verbal communication, such as the interviewee using their hands more energetically or leaning forwards to emphasise what was being said.

The process of identifying the rhetorical function involves searching for what kind of story is being told, for example if the narrative is presented in such a way that it is positioned against an invisible other in a counter argument (Langdridge, 2007). During this phase, I questioned what kinds of narratives were being shared and what these narratives seemed to be doing. I looked for how the interviewees were positioning themselves to key characters in the narratives, as well as noting in my reflective journal how the narrators may have been positioning themselves to me. The dynamic relationship between the narrator and myself as the interviewer is not a specified feature of the CNA model, however I was inspired by the work of others to consider this in my analysis (Reissman, 2008a). I felt that this was particularly important due to the research area and being overtly identifiable as a Muslim woman myself.

Stage 3: Identities and identities work

At this point in the analysis we are looking for the characteristics of the person that the narrative is creating (Langdridge, 2007). This was linked with stage 2, as I questioned of the text 'what kind of person does this narrative construct?' Langdridge (2007) suggests that this is related to what is known about the narrator, and what we know of the topic being investigated.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

With this stage the researcher is seeking to identify the common themes, which are a substructure of the text. Langdridge (2007) advocates identifying the themes and emerging ideas whilst being careful to maintain the narrative as a whole. I worked through each transcript in its entirety noting phases and emerging ideas, in a separate document. I then separated myself from the transcript, working from this secondary document, thinking about these themes and the relationship between them, searching for commonalities and

collapsing some themes into others. This process resulted in a table of themes and subthemes (appendix I). For the purposes of presenting the research, I then worked through this table of themes, writing a narrative summary for each participant (this can be found within the analysis and discussion chapter). I felt that this captured the fluidity of the narratives as they appeared within the interviews and best demonstrated how themes related, intertwined and overlapped.

Stage 5: Destabilising the narrative

This is similar to stage one, although rather than the subject of the critical analysis being the researcher; we now turn this attention on the text. Langdridge (2007) describes this stage as being "…explicitly political…" (p. 139) and explains the importance of the researcher to actively engage with social theory. During analysis, I attempted to apply a number of different singular social theories to my data, including Marxist feminist theory and symbolic interactionism, without success. Deconstructing the data from singular critical theory felt inadequate, as I felt these theories often lacked the kind breadth presented within the narratives. The data collected was embedded in social, political and cultural contexts and it felt important to be able to deconstruct the data in such as way that it did not neglect the intricacies and textures of the narratives. After some reflection and consultation with my research supervisor, I decided against restricting myself to one social theory, and instead to analyse the research as a whole from a broader feminist and sociological perspectives. While this deviates from the standardised model of CNA, Langdridge acknowledges that in some cases, an abbreviated version of CNA may be more appropriate. Perhaps in part due to the humanistic philosophy of my Counselling Psychology training, it felt important to apply theory that was meaningful to the data and the research aims, and to not lose the intricate detail of the narratives shared by my participants.

Stage 6: Synthesise

This final stage of CNA refers to the production and presentation of key narrative themes with respect to the participants in the research study. Langdridge (2007) is non-prescriptive regarding this stage but instead offers words of caution, warning against positioning the subjectivity of the researcher or the themes identified above the subjectivity of the narrator. My own synthesis of the data was an extensive process, moving between the transcripts, research notes, analysis and themes. I reflected on each participant, considering how they presented their British Muslim identity and how they related to this. By engaging with this stage in this way, I was able to remain focused on each individual narrator, and contextualise my understandings within their world, presented within the analysis and discussion chapter. I then extended this process across all participant data and engaged in a process of repeated reflections and re-conceptualisations, resulting in two overarching narrative constructions underpinned by a gendered narrative, which will be examined within the analysis and discussion chapter.

2.8. Methodological reflexivity

CNA places a significant emphasis on reflexivity as a very important part of the analytical process, and I have been particularly aware of the importance of this process for me as the researcher in this study. I carried out a reflexive interview prior to interviewing any participants, not only to help me finalise my interview schedule, but also in order to illuminate my own identity dilemmas and psychological conflicts in negotiating my identity as a British born Muslim woman living in London. I kept a reflexive journal throughout, making notes following interviews as well as during transcription of any particularly salient moments or any narratives that provoked a particular emotional response within me. This on-going process of reflexivity, from study design to write up, allowed me to continuously examine my position in relation to the research and my impact upon it. By bringing this into awareness, I aimed to

prevent the imposition of my own meanings upon the research and therefore helping to uphold research validity (Willig, 2013).

2.8.1. Ethical Considerations

As a member of the British Psychological Society (BPS) it is important to consider the ethical implications of my research, and draw upon the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009) as well as the BPS Code for Human Ethics (2010). Two founding principles of ethical research is the avoidance of harm to participants and informed consent (Rudestam & Newton, 2001; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Primarily, as a student at City University of London, my research has been granted approval by the University ethics committee, as well as by the ethics committee of my second recruitment site, St Georges University of London (appendix J and K, respectfully). All study participants were informed about the research before consenting to take part and they were offered a debriefing post interview. Rudestam & Newton (2001) explain seven elements of truly informed consent. These are: the participant must be informed of who the researcher is; why they are eligible for the study; what is the time commitment; what are the advantages to taking part in the study; are there any risks or disadvantages to being involved in the study and how has this been considered/managed; the participant must understand the study and be offered the chance to have questions answered; participation must be voluntary. I kept this in mind throughout recruitment and interviewing, ensuring that I adhered to these principles.

In any research study, it is important that participants are aware that they have the right to withdraw at any time (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008, Willig, 2013). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) make an interesting point that for the qualitative researcher this offer can be problematic for both the researcher and participant as, for example, withdrawal post publication would be an impossible guarantee. Based on this, I decided that participants would have the right to withdraw from the research up until one-month post interview and all participants were informed of this (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Participants were asked to consent to the audio recording of interviews; had any participants not wished to be recorded then this would have resulted in them being excluded from the study. In the case of this research, all participants consented to the audio recording of the interviews. All documentation relating to the study was anonymised in order to protect and maintain the participants confidentiality and securely destroyed once no longer required for study purposes. In order to try to ensure anonymity, documentation relating to the study and participants was stored separately. During transcribing, participants were given a unique alphabetical code to avoid using any sort of identifiers such as initials. As previously mentioned, the voice recorder used was encrypted, and digital audio recordings and transcriptions were kept on secure password protected files. Participants were offered the opportunity to receive a copy of a summary of the results and a copy of any publications; this is keeping with BPS guidelines (BPS, 2010), however all declined this. Further to this, in keeping with BPS guideline, I explained to all participants that while all information will be treated confidentially there are limits to confidentiality, such as when it is believed that individuals are at risk of harm (BPS 2009; 2010).

As this research was not sponsored or carried out within a specific organisation and as I am a student, and therefore a researcher, of City University data belongs to the University. I informed all participants that the research was to form part of a doctoral portfolio and upon completion of this thesis it will be stored in a library as a public document. This is to inform the participant that the study findings may become available though publication (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Participants were informed that all quotes used from the research would be annoymised in any future publications.

It is important to highlight the sensitive nature of this research. I began my Counselling Psychology doctorate course in September 2013, and in the subsequent years we sadly have seen a number of fatal terrorist attacks on civilian targets around Europe and beyond. The social effects of these attacks may yet to be seen, but it has resulted in a further politicising of what it means, within the social context, to be Muslim. This is something that I

was aware of, and participating in a discussion about ones sense of identity, or lack there of, within a community in which we live can be a sensitive topic for some. As I was aware that the topic that I was researching is sensitive in nature, prior to conducting interviews I had prepared plans to help manage a situation if a participant became distressed during the interview. King & Horrocks (2010) suggest that it is best to avoid abruptly stopping the interview if a participant becomes distressed, as often participants find it useful to discuss difficult topics with an interested and sympathetic listener. Instead, I had planned to offer a range of options in this instance, including offering to stop for a break or to end the interview and return at a later date (King & Horrocks, 2010).

There are ethical considerations that must be acknowledged of the snowball sampling that formed part of my recruitment. As I was recruiting through my own network, I had to be careful on how I used this network. I consciously avoided asking close friends or family to distribute my research information, as I felt this was too close to my personal life and could become ethically challenging, if for example I subsequently met participants at family events. Instead I asked colleagues and distant acquaintances to distribute my research information so that potential participants were able to contact me directly. This was to avoid any of my contacts acting as gatekeepers and recruiting participants on my behalf. I also did not ask participants how they found out about my research, so whether or not they had seen a poster in a university building or heard about my research through a third party, in an attempt to put my participants at ease. Ethically, I was concerned about my participants' comfort if they were aware during the interview of any social links between us, and the impact this may have on what they felt able to share with me. By not asking my participants how they found out about my research, I am unaware of which recruitment pathway led to participant involvement.

The relational nature of narrative research, with the focus on personal stories, also requires specific ethical consideration (Clandinin, 2006; 2007). Researchers should pay particular and careful attention to the way in which the participants voice is portrayed through the research,

and be careful to accurately convey the participants' intentions and be sensitive to any alternative interpretations about the participants which may be made based on writing up of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). It needs to be recognised that when one decides to participate in a research project within which they are asked to discuss personal experiences they are making themselves vulnerable in sharing these stories (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). While narrative research is not concerned with the factual accuracy of the events, participants' narratives reflect a subjective reality and thus it is the researchers responsibility to represent the subjective reality (Crossley, 2000).

2.9. Evaluation of the methodology

As a qualitative researcher the importance of producing results that can be reproduced is a contested issue, mainly as the importance of this is influenced by the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher and methodology (Lewis, Ritchie, Ormston & Morrell, 2014). Whilst it has not been my aim to generate reproducible findings, there has been a move for a more probing review of the research process in the evaluation of research findings (Crotty, 1998; Hiles & Cermak, 2007).

2.9.1. Validity

Validity tackles to what extent a given research study is successful in its attempt to examine the target of investigation (Lewis, Ritchie, Ormston & Morrell, 2014). This is problematic within qualitative research due to the extent to which validity is embedded within a positivist paradigm. This tension is recognised within the academic field, with some calling for a rejection of validity from qualitative methodologies altogether, arguing that qualitative studies should be examined from an altogether different criteria (Lewis, Ritchie, Ormston & Morrell, 2014).

Validity is a particularly difficult issue within narrative methodologies, as the very nature of narrative research is that it does not assume that data generated in research would equate to a representation of a 'truth' in terms of the narrators experiences. This is consistent with the

critical realist epistemological positioning of the research; whilst the existence of subjective experience is acknowledged the extent to which the researcher is able to access this is questioned. Therefore, while the search for a singular 'truth' in this way is flawed, the search for meaning is not only possible but also important (Plummer, 2000). Reflexivity can be used as a tool to ground the research within the contexts in which data is collected, as well as ensure that the researchers voice does not take priority over that of the participant (Finlay, 2002; Willig, 2008). CNA attempts to address this with the first stage of analysis, 'critique of the illusions of subjectivity', as well as the revisiting of reflexivity throughout.

2.9.2. Challenges

The focus of the research has changed over time, as I had initially intended to interview a sample of both male and female participants. I had interviewed three female participants by the time I interviewed a male participant, and through the process of interviewing and reflecting I had began to get some sense of the narratives presented by these female participants noticing that gender was emerging as a salient narrative. During my research planning, I had been challenged about my proposed sample of both male and female participants, however I had resisted limiting recruitment to a single gender as I felt it would be important to not focus on homogeneity of gender in order to have a balanced view. Nonetheless, after interviewing the male participant it became clear to me that the narratives he presented and the tone of these narratives were vastly different to my female participants. As I was aware that I would ultimately have to limit my sample size, due to the nature of CNA as discussed earlier, I became concerned about the impact of this on my analysis and the outcomes. I was concerned that my final analysis would be diluted as the gender differences between participants would dominate, and I wondered if the gendered narrative emerging within the female interviews would be lost. In order to address this, I revisited the research aims, and reflected upon what I wanted the research to be able to communicate. I felt the female voice to be important, and it felt that the gendered experience was central for the women that I had started to interview; therefore this was something that I felt I had to protect.

Following extensive consultation with my supervisor, I eventually decided to revise the research question, focusing on females only. Ethically, the male participant had taken the time to share personal narratives, and the choice to discard his involvement from the study was particularly difficult. At the earliest possible time, I emailed this participant to inform him of this change to the research question and to offer him the opportunity to meet to discuss this decision. He responded promptly, thanking me for contacting him and declining to meet.

Whilst this decision was influenced, in part, by my initial review of the first three female interviews, there were also concurrent recruitment issues of male participants. I contacted a total of nine non-academic sites in the form of Mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim community based organisations. I received no response from any of these sites. In an attempt to overcome this, I spoke with a personal friend who took an active role within the congregation of one of the Mosques that I had contacted. This friend had agreed to speak to the Islamic leader, to explain the study and act as a gatekeeper to potentially open up the door of communication between the Mosque and myself. While there are ethical considerations to take into account when working through gatekeepers, the use of these can be invaluable to recruiting from hard to reach communities (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014). Frustratingly, this also proved fruitless, and I had to seek alternative recruitment methods. On reflection, I have considered as to why these challenges may have occurred. As I was contacting religious institutions, the Islamic perspective is particularly relevant to consider. My recruitment posters and the research information I sent out to all organisations explained that interviews would be carried out with me as the researcher. While I did not stipulate that this would involve a one to one interview, it is likely that this would have been assumed. As all email communication went through my own City University email account, all recipients would have been able to infer that I was a female based on my traditionally Arabic name. There are various texts within Islamic doctrine that instruct that the 'mixing' of unrelated males and females is forbidden within this religious framework. I had not considered this prior to contacting these sites, however reflecting upon this afterwards has led me to question to

what extent I would have had similar difficulties had I been a male researcher. Equally, I have previously discussed at length the politicised nature of Islam over recent years, and the negative shift in media attention. There have been reports within popular media outlets that mosques in the UK have links to so called 'Islamic' terrorist organisations, and therefore have a role in radicalising young British Muslims (Mirror, 2016). Such a spotlight on these religious and community institutions may have had an impact in making Mosque leaders cautious or fearful of research investigations within their institutions.

2.10. Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be understood as the metaphorical "…being back on itself…" (Steier, 1991), with Mead (1962) explained reflexivity as a process of turning of ones experience back on itself, with this process being circular in nature - a process which allows us consider the way in which we, as researchers, are a part of the very systems we research (Steier, 1991). As a qualitative researcher it is important to acknowledge how I interact with the data and how my own background may impact upon the research (Langdridge 2007; Yardley, 2008; Willig 2013). I was born, raised and educated within the UK and having lived in London my entire life. I distinctly *feel* 'British'. However, I am also a Muslim of Moroccan decent, and I often experience the 'pull' of both parts of my cultural makeup, particularly with recent political, national and international events. Over recent years I have found it increasingly frustrating that when a colleague (an atheist of Caucasian background) voices her opinion over political events in the Israeli-Palestinian war, her words are met with agreement or perhaps as an invitation to discussion; yet when I voice the same opinion I find it difficult to miss the meeting of eyes between members of my audience. This had often made me consider where *I* position myself on a Muslim-British spectrum. Therefore, it is clear to see that as a person I am very much intertwined with the research topic and question, and in fact if the study had been conducted by another researcher, I could very well have been a participant. It is important that I recognise the way in which I experience the research topic as a British Muslim myself, as my existing assumptions and experiences will undoubtedly impact upon

my viewpoint. My instinct is to maintain my scientific objectivity and attempt to remove myself from the data. However, as a reflective practitioner, while it is important to consider the management of subjectivity, with a methodology such as Critical Narrative Analysis, reflexivity is built within the analytical process (Langdridge, 2007). Instead of 'bracketing' off my assumptions, Willig (2013) suggests that in order for knowledge to be possible, interacting with the data is necessary. Langdridge (2007) encourages this form of reflexivity at multiple points during the study-before the study has begun; in the middle of the study period; post data collection but prior to research being written up.

<u>Chapter 3: Analysis and Discussion</u>

<u>Chapter overview</u>

I present in this chapter a combination of the Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) of participant interviews as well as a discussion of the research findings, introducing appropriate and relevant psychological theory. Stages one to six of CNA capture what would traditionally be seen within an analysis and discussion chapter, therefore blending these chapters achieves the goal of presenting the analytic stages in its entirety. The chapter is split into two parts; part one presents stages one to four of CNA as an examination of the narratives <u>within</u> participants. The analysis is taken further within part two, which presents an amalgamation of stages five and six <u>across</u> participants. As described within the methodology chapter, for this study I utilised an amended CNA, please see the methodology chapter for a detailed breakdown of the analytic strategy and Langdridge (2007) for the standardised CNA methodology.

<u>Part 1: Introduction</u>

Part one of this chapter begins with stage one of the analysis process and a presentation of my own personal reflections, referred to by Langdridge (2007) as a critique of the illusions of subjectivity. Following this I take the reader through the CNA analytic journey for each participant in turn, starting with an introduction of the individual as well as a synopsis of their narrative including tone and function of these narratives. I have chosen to present my participants individually as independent cases as I felt this was the most effective way to convey the unique quality to each participant, their experiences and the narratives they shared. While the research is not concerned with issues of ethnicity or cultural background, it would have been naïve to neglect the cultural context of my participants, and how parental country of origin may have impacted Islamic experience. During the transcription phase, I became concerned about what intricate detail and texture may be lost if I were to carry out an analysis across participants. CNA manages these concerns well, as it is well suited to

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case study work and instructs the researcher to contextualise the narrator and narratives within broader social and cultural contexts. Therefore, presenting my participants in this way is in line with the CNA model, and allows for an in-depth exploration of narratives as well as an integration of the relevant social or cultural contexts for each participant.

Similarly, I present a narrative thematic analysis of each participant in the order that they were interviewed, using extracts [2] of each interview to illuminate their narratives. This thematic analysis is presented narratively in order to capture the fluidity of the narratives shared, and is punctuated liberally with extracts in order to allow the narrative to communicate directly to the reader. Themes often overlapped and intertwined and a more traditional presentation of the thematic analysis did not capture nor convey the texture of the narratives. Rather, my thematic analysis started and ended with a narrative; please see the methodology chapter for a detailed explanation on how this was executed. For clarity, I present a diagrammatic summary of the main themes at the end of each participant and a table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.

3.1. Overview of analytic strategy

The purpose of analysing narratives is to gain an insight into the idiographic way in which existence is experienced, understood and interpreted (Crossley, 2000). This may suggest that my analysis of the data presents a direct window into the experiences of my participants; this would be a false expectation. Rather, if narratives are to be understood as being constructed within a particular social context (Willig, 2008; Murray, 2015), then it would also be reasonable to perceive that the narratives presented by my participants during the interviews are, at least in some way, co-constructed between the participant and myself as the researcher. The relationship between the participant, their narratives and myself as a Muslim female researcher is discussed throughout this analysis.

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[2] Narratives are referenced using page number and first line number.

3.2. Stage 1: Critique of the illusions of subjectivity

This stage of CNA was particularly significant to me, as I was aware that due to the close proximity of the research topic to my own life, reflexivity would be an exceptionally important process to prevent the projection of my own experiences onto the participants or data. I started a formalised process of reflexivity during the pre-analysis phase of transcription of the audio taped interviews. In truth, however, the reflexive process began prior to the finalisation of the research question in a more informal manner. This included personal note taking and extensive discussion in my own therapy exploring my research and what I hoped to achieve in conducting research that I could have been a participant for. During this time I kept a reflexive diary, and throughout transcription and analysis I made notes of any particular points of an interview that struck me for any reason. At times, I was struck by the narrative being described, personally identifying with the narrator through the stories shared as I recognised a similar experience in my own life. At other times, I was struck by how different our experiences were, or perhaps if a narrative provoked an emotional response in me. Following transcription, I then brought these notes together as a first stage reflexivity, which was used as a foundation for multiple reflections throughout the process of analysis and write up.

I am a British Muslim. I am a British Muslim woman. I am a woman who is both Muslim and British. Even as I write these sentences I feel conflicted as to which noun to use first. Throughout my life, I have felt an internal, and at times, external battle between these identities. I have always felt a constant negotiation between the demands of my religion, including the expectations and obligations of my religion, and the demands of my family and the inner London society in which I have spent my entire life.

As a teenager, I recall phases when I would deny that my family were Muslim in order to feel like my friends and be able to engage in doing what, I believed, other 'normal' British teenagers were doing. During this time, I actively suppressed any affiliation to my Muslim or

even my Arab heritage, feeling ashamed of it. This sense of shame was exacerbated when on September 11th 2001 Islam seemed to become a dirty word. I was 15 years old. I remember going to school on September 12th and suddenly my Arabic name and the religious group to which I belonged became a topic of great discussion amongst my peers, as well as an easy target to use as an insult during school yard conflicts. It was during these transitional years that I felt unable to *be* Muslim if I were to remain British. Conversely, there have been other times of my life when I have been so engaged with my religion that I have distanced myself from non-Muslim friends, convinced that they would be unable to understand my spiritual growth. It has been a fact that within my life, I have never quite felt to be equal parts British and Muslim, as I may be equal parts a friend and a sibling. Rather, for the majority of my life, I have never felt 'fully' British and never 'properly' Muslim.

Due to these experiences, I have had to be careful in my consideration of how my own life may influence how I understand the way in which other women experience and negotiate their identities of being both British and Muslim, as well as being mindful about what I may 'see' or pay attention to during the process of analysis. Instead I recognise the importance of remaining balanced and aware of my own subjectivity in terms of the research area, while also acknowledging the importance of remaining led by the participant and the data produced. During the interview process, I have been conscious to try to maintain my neutrality, and to avoid assumptions by maintaining a curious and open position. In order to maintain this self-awareness, I have re-engaged with this reflective process throughout.

Stage 2: Introducing Layla and narratives

Layla is a 21-year-old female university student. She is the youngest of her siblings and both of her parents moved to the UK from Egypt. Layla is currently single and does not have any children.

Layla's narrative is largely episodic and atemporal in nature, as opposed to chronological. She shared a number of different narratives during our interview, and the overall tone was rather sad and despondent, with moments of animation and anger when Layla recounted occasions in which she felt she had been treated differently, or had been attacked, because of her Muslim faith.

At times, the tone of the narrative shifted to a generalised feeling of not quite belonging; feeling different to older generations of her family and particularly feeling different to her mother, but also to her peers and non-Muslim friends. Layla seemed to take pride in her 'modern Muslim' stance, from which she openly challenged aspects of the Islamic faith and ruling, consciously choosing to not wear the hijab. During the process of analysis, this has struck me as the interviewer. I do choose to wear a hijab, therefore I was wearing this during our interview, and I wondered if Layla was making some reference to me, as being in some way un-progressive in my expression of my Islamic faith and experience. Perhaps Layla was communicating to me, that just as she is different to others, we too are different to each other as Muslim women.

Stage 3: Identities and identity work

Layla presents herself as a 'modern Muslim' and there is a very independent tone at various points throughout our interview. She presents as being proud of being a 'modern Muslim woman', and this seems to be defined by being educated, working, being financially

independent of her parents and being 'liberal' in her views. Layla seems acutely aware of her difference to others around her, and the boundaries she lives within, in terms of socialising and choosing not to drink alcohol. This difference to others, alongside feeling she is *treated* differently to others, gives a sense of being outside or separate to those around her, both personally and politically. Layla is angry about this, but also seems defiant in refusing to be what others define as a Muslim; perhaps as a consequence of her 'modern Muslim' outlook. However, Layla also seems to identify with the cultural expectations of her and her 'reputation', and whilst this seems uncomfortable to her, she recognises the importance of this to her parents and the wider community to which the family belong. Whilst Layla presents as a 'modern Muslim' and admits being uncomfortable with this importance of 'reputation', this does seem to impact the way in which she makes choices in her life, for example being mindful of the way in which she socialises with male colleagues and her concern about making male friends and being 'seen' out with them.

Throughout our interview, Layla talks of the separation she feels from others; the older generations of her family, her non-Muslim friends and co-workers. Layla seems to manage this separateness by, to some degree, letting go of either her British or Muslim identity. This is evidenced in examples, such as by complying to Islamic ideology in the form of wearing the headscarf on religious occasions, or by suppressing her Islamic beliefs and socialising with colleagues in the 'British tradition' of after work drinks.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

The interview with Layla starts with some recognition of opportunities for independence, which Layla seems to link with being British.

> *…being British provides me with an opportunity to meet lots of people…I can move around the European Union if I want… it just provides me with lots of opportunity… I think if I was to be in a different country, erm so more of an*

Eastern country rather than a Westernised country I wouldn't get that opportunity… (1:5)

…yeah, so, I'm able to go to University, I'm educating myself… I'm able to have all these opportunities, so as a woman I'm able to work (3: 25)

However, in some part at least, the impact of these 'British' opportunities seems to be a point of contention between Layla and her mother. Layla describes feeling a sense of expectation from her mother, powered by her mother's strongly held Islamic beliefs. As these expectations are not in line with Layla's own outlook, this can often lead to a tension between mother and daughter.

…the Muslim community has got very strong family ties, they often look after several generations, so for example you might find someone looking after their mother and their grandmother at the same time…(5; 38)

She [Layla's mother] *has cultural beliefs from her own country, where my views have been affected by how I've grown up… the people I've been around... (3:19)*

So, if someone were to see you [out with a male friend] *that knew you, so in the Muslim community there is this whole big thing about reputation being a girl… (22: 206)*

There seems to be a tension here for Layla, as she describes the family and religious expectation upon her and the importance of her 'reputation' as a female. This seems to be an external pressure upon her, as she describes herself as a modern Muslim woman at multiple points throughout the interview. Layla defines being a modern Muslim by her 'liberal' views, which seems in opposition to the importance placed on her 'reputation' by her mother.

I am quite liberal, in terms of, I do pray, I follow you know the rule of praying 5 times a day (6:50)

Researcher: mhmm

Erm, however, I don't necessarily dress in a traditional Muslim way, if that makes sense, so I don't wear a headscarf and I do wear skinny jeans… (6: 52)

Erm, so I'm quite a modern Muslim if that makes sense, and I have got my own strong views on situations, like I don't necessarily always agree with what my religion has said (6: 54)

Layla explains the conflict that occurs for her when considering particular Islamic teaching and opinion.

…I think the difficulty comes in when your own views sometimes goes against those of the religion, so for example, like in terms of adultery, the religion says to stone people to death and I don't agree with that at all (37:359)

Whilst Layla expresses her conflict with particular Islamic teaching and the expectation of her family, she also describes feeling politically conflicted at recent world events that had occurred shortly prior to interview taking place.

Yeah, so like, when people talk about the news, for example, and they give opinions about stuff that's going on in Paris, for example, people want you to condemn, so the news calls for Muslims to condemn it, but why should I? That's got nothing to do with my religion! I wasn't told to go and kill people... when the Paris thing happened, Facebook changed the thing, everyone's profile picture to the Parisian flag, sorry the French flag

Researcher: mhmm

And it's like, well there's Syrian kids out there dying, why have you not put a baby on there or you know the Iraqi children or the Kurdish women? (12: 115)

Layla became most energetic during our interview when discussing political matters concerning the perception of the Muslim faith in popular media. However, she expressed a similar conflict and a sense of difference to the non-Muslim community on a personal level, which ultimately leaves Layla and her lifestyle, misunderstood by many of those around her.

> [As a Muslim] *I've got to follow certain rules and it's a way of life, so for example when you meet people and they go out, for example, for a drink, or they want to socialise in that kind of way, it's quite difficult to explain why you don't want to go, because they say 'oh you know you could just have an orange juice' or whatever, but at the same time I shouldn't really be around the whole alcohol thing, it's very difficult for people to understand because they see it as black and white… (10: 95).*

> *Erm, it's also like, I think it's different when you've become friends with a woman to go out with them even if they're drinking than when you've become friends with a man at work*

> Researcher: right

> *And they want to go out, cos obviously you're not really supposed to, sort of British values are that men and women are always friends and that's absolutely fine, however, in like a Muslim situation, the Muslim, how do I describe it… in the Muslim faith men and women aren't really supposed to socialise or integrate with each other (21:197)*

> *…It's difficult in the UK when you're socialising with people who have different beliefs to yourself (11: 102)*

During analysis, I noted Layla's use of "…how do I describe it…" indicating that she was searching for a way to explain her point to me. It is noteworthy that Layla felt the need to do this, as I am identifiable as a Muslim woman, yet she did not assume that I would share this

understanding of the Muslim faith. Layla seems to be positioning me as unlike her and her Islamic experience, unable to understand her experience as a Muslim woman and the prescriptions of Islam regarding the socialising of men and women.

If we were to take a birds eye view of the various narratives shared by Layla, we can deduce that Layla seems to be describing a lack of belonging within both her Muslim and British identities, captured as the various expectations upon her, that she experiences as pulling her in different directions and resulting in conflicts. These positions seem to be difficult to reconcile as Layla described managing these conflicts by sacrificing one identity in favour of the other.

…I was working in the City, they're very big on like team bonding and going out for these sorts of things [after work drinks], *and I wasn't really going cos I wasn't really getting on or clicking with my team as much*

Researcher: mhmm

However, when I did start to go, we did click a bit more, and got on a bit more, erm, and they got to know me a bit more, and I got to know them a bit more, so it was really good for the team building aspect, however, they were all drinking at the same time as we were all out so that's kind of where I had to sacrifice who I am as a Muslim (27: 261)

Erm, yeah so like my brother was getting married, so my mum was like 'you need to wear a headscarf on your head' because the Imam [religious leader] *is going to be there and he's not going to wanna see your head, and so I kind of had to put my liberal beliefs to one side, the me who doesn't wear a headscarf, and put one on (28:271)*

Please see fig (1) for a diagrammatic representation of the main themes, a full table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.
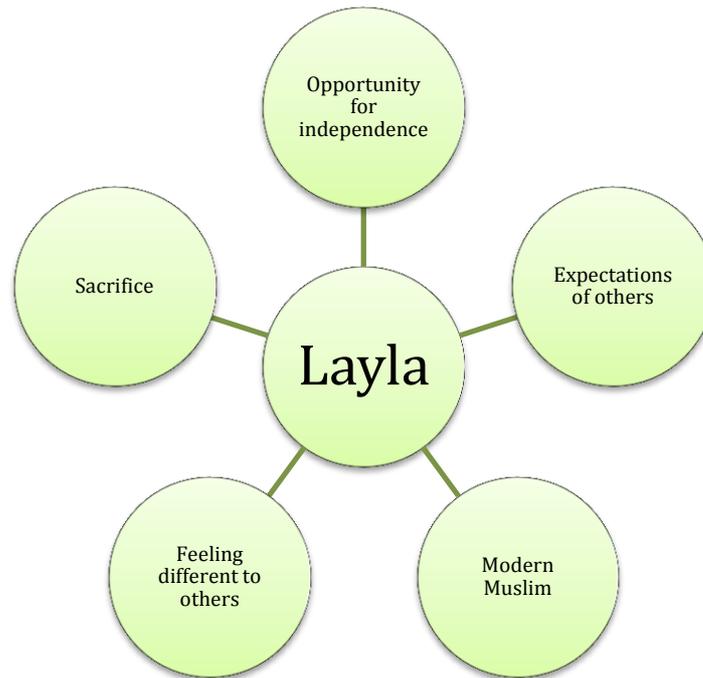
Fig1. Diagrammatic representation of the main themes for Layla

3.3.2. Sara

Stage 2: Introducing Sara and the narratives

Sara is a 29-year-old professional living in London. She has a Master's degree in English literature and is currently employed. Sara is of mixed ethnic background and her father is originally from Egypt. Sara has both male and female siblings and she is married to her second husband and has no children.

Sara presents a number of different narratives throughout our interview, with the overall tone starting off as optimistic and liberated in nature, and culminating in a narrative that seems darker, full of loss and sacrifice. Sara begins by proudly acknowledging her rights as a British woman and the freedom this allows her, whilst also identifying herself as liberal in her experience of Islam. Sara's tone is steady throughout the interview and her pace is stable until she begins to discuss feeling out of place amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, at different times of her life. At this point Sara's speech becomes much more animated, audibly raising her voice to convey different emotions within the narrative.

Sara describes a time when she felt particularly distant from Islam, feeling unconnected from other Muslims, a time that she describes as a period of "rebellion" (line 223). Since her adolescence, Sara has spent different periods of her life both wearing and not wearing the hijab, perhaps putting her in a unique position of knowing what it is like on both sides of this particular fence. When describing these 'rebellious' periods of her life Sara's tone is defiant; she seems clear that the removal of her hijab was an overt and palpable act of rebellion against who she felt she was expected to be as a 'good Muslim wife', during a time when things in her first marriage were actually very problematic. I have been particularly struck by the way that Sara described herself as 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. On reflection during analysis, this seems to be a particularly interesting way in which Sara conceptualises a duality in her sense of self and identity. I will discuss this further below.

Stage 3: Identity and Identities work

Sara presents herself in a very reflective way, talking openly about difficult times in her life such as the breakdown of her first marriage and challenges she has had with Islam. Whilst Sara describes a journey that has led her back to Islam, she is also candid about her sense of feeling somewhat out of place; being criticised and mocked as the "disrespectful English girl" (line 52) by her Egyptian family and in-laws, whilst simultaneously feeling that she does not quite seem to fit in as British. This sense of not quite having a place seems to be reflected in her identification with the characters Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and the acknowledgement of the different parts of herself that seem to pull in vastly different directions.

Sara studied English literature at both undergraduate and Master's degree level, and she is likely to be familiar with the literary characters and the analysis of these characters. According to the original Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde stories, Dr Jekyll appears as decent in his character, whereas the clandestine Mr Hyde is portrayed as violent, immoral and even evil (Stevenson, 1927). To consider this further, Sara experiences her Muslim identity as

"…being a good person…" (line 88); she describes her charitable contributions and living her life in a way that contributes positively to her society, as stipulated by Islam. Speculatively, this is in line with the Dr Jekyll character. Sara then introduces her Mr Hyde, explaining her decision to remove the hijab after wearing this since her teenage years. She describes her rebellion against Islam as a rebellion against her first marriage, in which she felt unhappy and unfulfilled. This Mr Hyde part of her seemed to allow her to engage in what she deemed Islamically inappropriate, such as clubbing with friends. However, this too seemed to leave her feeling guilty, as she recounts abrupt, intrusive thoughts of 'I shouldn't be here'. Sara describes this oscillating between these two different parts of herself as a pattern that she has become so accustomed to that it now seems involuntary. In some respect, this account of Sara's distancing from Islam as being in some way instigated by this darker component of her personality may also serve the purpose of distancing this time of her life from her 'good' character, particularly in an interview situation with me as an identifiably Muslim woman.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

Sara begins our interview by identifying the freedoms which she feels have come as part of her British identity. For Sara, these freedoms are vast and span various facets, including her rights as a woman over her own body.

> *…because even down to like, wearing a t-shirt, if you were to wear a t-shirt back home* [referring to Egypt]*, and when I say t-shirt I mean like a sleeveless top, people have a heart attack, so you can't walk freely even in the street (3; 21).*

> *…to have my shoulders out, as a Muslim woman especially, is scandalous…but being British means I'm free to wear whatever I like, it's even about being free to say whatever I want (3; 29).*

Throughout our interview, Sara spoke frequently on issues relating to gender and she was candid about her experiences growing up as a female within her Muslim family, speaking

openly about the differences that she was aware of between her and her sisters and her brothers.

> *I guess I noticed a difference between how we, as girls, and my brothers were treated. You know, my brothers didn't have to do anything really around the house and as we got older, they both would go out half the night clubbing and stuff but there was no way that the girls could do that, and that wasn't just my family, because it was like that for all my girlfriends, for all my cousins and stuff, it just became our normal (22; 213)*

Sara also reflected on the negotiations that had to take place in the early phases of the relationship with her current husband, who was raised in Egypt, and the challenges that emerged as they attempted to reconcile their conflicting expectations of her role as a wife.

> *…when we first got married, it took a lot to work out with my husband about our expectations of each other, he was used to what a marriage looks like in Egypt, and I suppose what a wife is. So he thought that I would just cook and clean every day and he just had to work, when of course the reality is very different cos I wanted to work and that was important to me (5; 48).*

> *…in a very conservative Islamic country like Egypt, where women are often seen and not heard, I'm told that I'm the disrespectful English girl, because I ask my husband to do things or disagree with his opinion (6; 53).*

It is at this point in our interview that the overall tone of the narrative shifts, as Sara tells me about this conflict in the expectations of her as a wife, and how this often leaves her feeling unable to gel with her new husband and his family. The nature of Sara's relationship was not discussed, and so it is not known if this marriage was arranged for her or not. However, this negotiation of roles between husband and wife seems to implicitly involve her husbands' family as she describes a negotiation of the role 'wife' in relation to both her husband and his family.

In a similar way, just as Sara describes feeling outside of her Egyptian heritage and family, she also recounts feeling on the outside of others within her country of birth, the UK.

Being in Britain, I don't actually feel like I fit in, but even when I go to Egypt, I'm still too Western [used fingers to indicate air quotes] *for them too. It's not until I got married and started going to Egypt really regular that I realised that I don't really fit in anywhere… (12; 110)*

Sara also brings attention to the difficulties that she has experienced throughout her life living as a Muslim within Britain.

I remember when 9/11 happened and at the time I was in school and I was wearing a headscarf and I remember after that time really feeling like in the pit of my stomach like everything had changed you know, like noticing people looking at me twice as I walked down the street, and that was something that I hadn't noticed before… (14; 136).

…I think it was mid to late secondary school when I noticed, ok so my faith and where I live, they don't really go hand in hand together (16; 149).

…being a Muslim is hard in Britain because we're labelled for the wrong reason and labelled in a negative way (13; 122).

Sara had first started wearing a hijab at around 13 years old, and whilst this had been on and off since this time, she finally decided to stop wearing the hijab altogether at around the age of 25 years. During our interview, Sara notices that this gives her a somewhat unique experience of living parts of her adulthood as both being easily identifiable as a Muslim due to the hijab, and being unidentifiable as a Muslim when she had chosen to no longer wear this. Whilst the presence or absence of the hijab in both Muslim and British society represents differing norms, for Sara she feels these are not particularly dissimilar.

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So in British culture, women are able to express themselves in what they wear and showing off their body if they choose, now I suppose that is freedom but that kind of goes against my Muslim values, but in Islam the freedom women have is different. Often people assume that because Muslim women cover up and stuff they're oppressed, but it's not like that at all, it's more about the freedom to only show what we want to who we want, and that actually feels more freeing (21; 203).

In the above excerpt, Sara is advocating that to wear the hijab is an Islamic freedom; a female freedom to conceal or reveal to whomever one chooses. However, in contradiction to this, Sara also likens her decision to no longer wear the hijab as an act of rebellion.

It was almost like a rebellion, like I was rebelling against being the good Muslim wife who wears a headscarf because that wasn't working, my marriage was failing and I was so unhappy (24; 224).

She describes a period of time when she was at her most unhappy with other aspects of her life, namely during the time in which her first marriage was breaking down. Therefore, the hijab became synonymised with a set of Islamic obligations and rules associated with her role as a woman and a wife. In removing the hijab, she was also rebelling against the rules of who she 'should' be as a wife in her failing marriage.

However, while this rebellion was in response to internal distress at the difficulty she was experiencing in her marriage, it was not without sacrifice. For Sara 'letting lose' by going out with friends to clubs was an expression of fun in a 'very western way' (line 244), and was intended to alleviate the distress she was experiencing during this difficult time, however, she noticed that this would often bring up impulsive feelings of guilt.

…on a night out, [I would] *dance for a bit, and for a second I'll think 'I shouldn't be here'…it's like a sudden sharp moment. It's hard to explain, it can feel like my life is a big contradiction (29; 276).*

During the interview, Sara described herself as a liberal Muslim, although she used this term to explain that "…[she] can be better…" (line 171).

I would say that I am liberal in the sense that, I like to think that I practice, and I'm not, like I do, I do practice, but I'm not the most devout, if that makes sense

Researcher: Ok, can you say any more about that?

P: There's a balance I think, and sometimes the balance isn't equal.

Researcher: What is the balance between?

erm I suppose the balance is between what the religion prescribes to us in how we should live and how we should be, and how I feel comfortable living and who I think I am which is influenced by more than just my religion (10; 96)

We can see that for Sara, the term 'liberal' is not used in the traditional definition, perhaps as a reflection of open-mindedness. Instead this word has a self-critical element as Sara struggles with stumbling over her words, "*I like to think that I practice, and I'm not, like I do, I do practice, but I'm not the most devout…*" (line 96) and specifying that "*… sometimes the balance isn't equal*" (line 99) demonstrating an unease with this. Later on, within the interview Sara brings this point up again, without prompting.

Even though like earlier I said I was liberal and stuff, I will still try and practice as much as I can. And try and remember it, the religion is always at the back, or shall I say at the front of my mind before anything that I do, I erm, I go to the Muslim handbook shall I say (laughing) to see if its permissible or not. So it's very important, very important hands down (17; 156)

At this point of the interview, I wonder if Sara returns to the point of being 'liberal' in order to revise how she presents herself to me. Here we can see her emphasise the importance of religion to her, and her Islamic practice. The common saying of 'its in the back of my mind' is

quickly revised to change the position of Islam to the forefront of her thinking. The term 'Muslim handbook' (line 158), and also the choice of this term over naming the Islamic Holy book of the Qu'ran, coupled with the awkward laugh over this demonstrates how she is trying to convey to me that she 'sticks to the rules'.

Sara spoke of herself in a split way, identifying the different parts of her which seemed to be present with different groups of friends; namely with her Muslim friends and her non-Muslim friends. While the shift between the two worlds seems effortless, it is not always completely effective.

> *Like even when I was at uni, I'd be at uni and I may be sitting with friends while they're getting drunk or whatever, but when I get home with my religious family it's like a whole different world and I just adapt to that too. (27; 261).*

> *…it's almost like being Jekyll and Hyde, you are one way there and another, and when I say there I mean with my Muslim friends or Muslim community or whatever, and a different way when I'm with my non-Muslim friends (28; 266).*

> *…That automatic shifting in how I am can work, but it doesn't work at the same time, because I can have these sudden moments when I realise that I shouldn't be where I am (29; 278).*

Please see fig (2) for a diagrammatic representation of the main themes, a full table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.
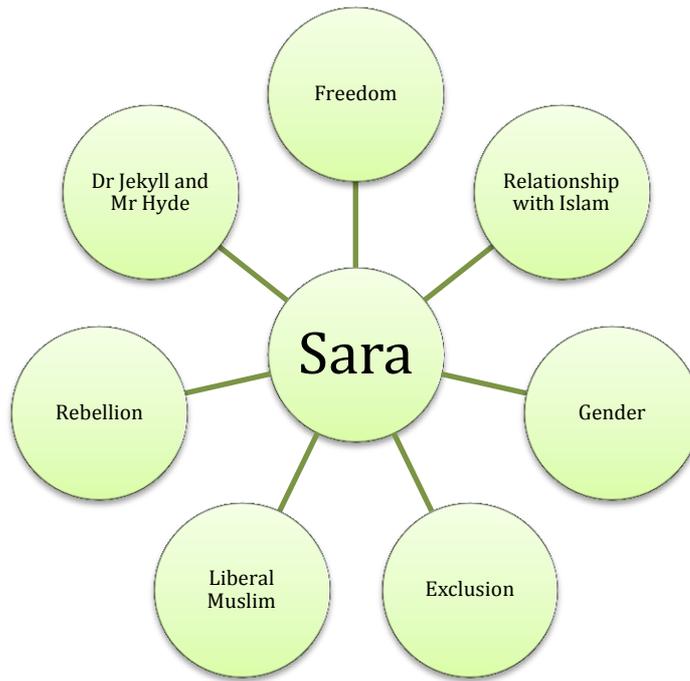
Fig 2: Diagrammatic representation of the main themes for Sara.

<u>3.3.3. Mona</u>

Stage 2: Introducing Mona and the narratives

Mona is a 36-year-old woman living and working in London. Mona is of Pakistani parentage, and has both male and female siblings. She is educated to university level, and is currently single with no children.

Mona started our interview by explaining the various ways in which being British, particularly living in London gives a sense of belonging, explaining that due to the diversity in London, everyone belongs. For Mona, 'belonging' referred to a civic model of identity rather than a representation of race or ethnicity (Jacobson, 1997a; Smith, 1991; 1998; Vadher & Barrett, 2009). For Mona the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of London allowed her the sense that she 'fit in' with those around her. During this narrative, the tone is very upbeat and positive as Mona demonstrates how much she appreciates being from London, noting its uniqueness compared to other parts of the UK. With this narrative, Mona is letting me know that she *is* British and she *does* belong. Her emphasis on this may have been induced by the

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very nature of the interview and the subject matter; by recruiting women on the basis of their British and Muslim co-identity, this may in some way raise the question of their co-existence. Therefore, the very occurrence of the interview may be perceived as a challenge to these coexisting identities and this in turn may reflect on Monas emphasis that she *is* British whilst also being Muslim.

However, this narrative and tone quickly shifts as Mona recounts instances of judgement and subsequent difference in treatment; narrating instances of being judged for being both Muslim while in the UK and for being British while in traditionally Muslim countries abroad. The tone here is of hardship; Mona describes herself as not fitting the stereotypical image of a Muslim woman as she does not adopt 'traditional' Islamic dress, and there are some instances that she suffers for this.

The narrative shifts again, and becomes expressively religious. Mona talks extensively about the many ways in which being Muslim positively enhances her life. This narrative appears at a number of different points throughout the interview, and during analysis I have given careful consideration to the function of this narrative. Just as Mona emphasised that she is British, here she is emphasising that she *is* Muslim. In her expressively religious speech, in which she explains to me Islamic philosophy of respecting the elderly, honesty and so on, she is *showing* me that she is Muslim. As Mona and I sat opposite one another, with me wearing long sleeves and my hijab and Mona sat in short sleeves and her hair pulled back we look physically very different. In some ways, Mona may well describe me as fitting the stereotypical image of a Muslim woman that she feels she does not fit. Yet, she wants to be able to demonstrate to me that despite this difference between us, and therefore our difference in our in interpretation of Islam, she too *is* Muslim.

 I wonder if this narrative is closely linked to another that appears shortly after, in which Mona describes instances where she is in opposition or in some way compared to more 'strict' Muslims or Muslim women who chose to wear a hijab. As I work through this analysis, I can

see in my mind's eye the image of myself, in my hijab, sitting opposite Mona during the interview, and I wonder if in the subtext of these narratives Mona is speaking of me- explaining that by not wearing a headscarf she experiences judgement and difficulty for her choices and religious beliefs, and perhaps her fantasy is that I do not.

Stage 3: Identities and identity work

Mona presents herself throughout the interview as someone who can be unfairly treated by both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities with which she identifies. There is a sadness to this, particularly when Mona describes some of the difficulties she encountered trying to arrange her father's funeral as a single woman without her brothers or any other male presence. At the start of the interview Mona begins by speaking comprehensively about the way in which being British, particularly in London, by definition means a sense of belonging and togetherness with others. However, throughout the interview Mona recounts instances where she has felt different to others around her, starting early on in her childhood right up until recent instances in adulthood. Mona talked of feeling that, on occasion, she misses out on bonding with colleagues because she does not drink alcohol, feeling that those people who went out for drinks somehow had a stronger bond, which she was unable to be a part of. The disparity here seems to be something that Mona is aware of, commenting that within London she feels all belong because everyone is so different.

Mona is candid about her experiences with other Muslim women, particularly those who wear a hijab. As I read through the transcript and listen to the taped interview, I feel a sense of hurt in the narratives Mona shares with me. Mona describes feeling judged by other Muslim women, particularly those who she perceived to be more compliant with Muslim ruling, and on occasion through our interview Mona almost feels to be defending her decisions that may otherwise be deemed 'un-Islamic'. I wonder if Mona can find other Muslim women rejecting and persecutory because of their perceived judgement. I also cannot help but wonder about

Monas motivations, and I wonder if she bases her decisions and life choices on a resistance to conform with the Islamic perspective, or rather a desire to comply with the British.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

In the early stages of our interview, Mona talks of how lucky she feels to be British and she is poignant about the parallels she draws between the life of her immediate family living in the UK, and that of her extended family living in Pakistan.

> *…in London I've had times when I've walked down the street in an abaya* (traditional Islamic dress) *and felt completely comfortable, just as comfortable as walking through London in a tracksuit, you get what I mean, so yeah being British isn't just one colour or race or whatever, like all of us can fit here (3: 20).*

> *…going back home* (to Pakistan) *and seeing the way life is out there you know it's great if you have a lot of money, but if you're kind of the average joe who goes to work and comes home and pays your bills, you're gonna have a struggling life… (7:61)*

Interestingly, Mona refers to Pakistan, her parents' country of origin as 'back home', however; this seems to be the end of Mona's identification or affiliation with Pakistan.

> *…so I go to Pakistan on holidays but I never feel at home there… I mean I don't feel like them at all* [people from Pakistan are] *almost like alien people to me, I don't think the way they think, I don't behave the way they behave… (28:265)*

Mona reflected upon her childhood, considering particularly the rules by which she was taught to live by and the way in which this highlighted to her how different she was to other children.

> *…I was probably 5/6 but I remember like obviously you go into school and my mum used to tell me 'make sure you don't eat sausages, you don't eat pork', and*

I remember having an argument with one of the boys I was in school with because he had a sausage on his plate and I remember saying to him, 'you're not allowed that'….I just remember not being able to understand why he could eat the sausage and I couldn't basically… (16:146)

At this point Mona seems to really connect with the sense of confusion that she experienced as a child, as to why she was so unlike the other children around her. It seems that this was not explained to her in any great detail. She also describes a similar situation, the day on which her own mother started to wear the hijab, and the sense that something important had changed in their lives.

She [her mum] *must have started wearing it* [hijab] *when I was about 9 or 10, so again that was another point that I realised things had changed and we were very different, you know one day my mum had her hair out and the next day she wore a headscarf and cos she didn't really talk to us about it at all, I didn't really understand why that had happened or kind of what it really meant (17:154)*

Mona emphasised the importance of her British identity, and the sense of belonging being British provided. Here, Mona employed civic boundaries of British-ness, specifying during our interview that she felt being British was not a reflection of ethnic background. However, Mona went on to describe instances in which she felt that she had been judged on the basis of her religious or ethnic identity, which in turn had an negatively impacted on the way in which she was treated.

…I've been to the doctors before and they've just assumed that because I'm Asian for example, they assume that I'm not sexually active so they don't offer me certain screens like a smear test or whatever…(4:31).

… [when talking about telling people she does not drink alcohol because of her beliefs] *you do get the 'oh so how do you let your hair down?' or like that look that says 'that's a bit boring'… (6:48).*

Mona also explained a term she coined as the 'Haram Police', referring to other Muslims who she experienced as judgemental and punishing;

> *… the Haram police is a kind of term people have for the judgemental people who are quick to tell you that what you're doing is bad or forbidden in Islam, so for example, I remember being in a bar with a friend of mine who does wear a headscarf and it was summer, so we were sitting outside with glasses of coke and food and stuff, it was someone's leaving do I think, and someone walked up to us and was saying stuff like 'you shouldn't be here'…(21:199)*

However, Mona realised that while she felt she has been judged and mistreated based on her Muslim identity, there are other situations in which she felt that she has also been treated poorly and judged negatively based on her British identity.

> *…when I was going home* [Pakistan] *for my dad's funeral, and because I'm dual national, and I only had my British passport and stuff, the immigration services were just really difficult, like by entering with my British passport I was someway denying like my ethnicity and heritage… (6:51)*

Mona talks passionately about her Islamic beliefs throughout, noting the many ways in which she feels her life and wellbeing are enhanced by her Islamic framework. However, she commented that a 'stricter' Muslim could interpret her lifestyle as conflicting with Islamic teaching and principles.

> *…I was recently out recently of a night, just going out for something to drink, I don't drink alcohol but that doesn't meant I can't have a virgin mojito or whatever, but a stricter Muslim would look at me and say you shouldn't be in that venue, and you know even inside of me, those thoughts run through my mind, the kind of awareness that I know that I shouldn't be in there... but I just tell myself that it's something I will have to answer for on the day of judgment and I know what I'm doing in those places…(13:121).*

Mona also speaks specifically about the comparison she draws with other Muslim women; specifically those who choose to wear the hijab.

> [Describing a time when she was on holiday with a friend who wears a hijab]
> *…we came across a really pretty mosque and my friend suggested we stop and pray there, cos you know it just happened to be time for prayer, and I obviously couldn't cos I wasn't properly dressed, and you know like inside I just felt so uncomfortable cos she was able to do that and she was able to take part in the kind of group prayer and I just sat outside and waited for her just feeling really rubbish really… (15:138)*

> *…I went out with a friend of mine who wears hijab and the waiter or whatever picked up her wine glass to take away, I guess assuming that she wouldn't be drinking or whatever but he left mine, and I understand why he obviously can't tell that I'm Muslim by looking at me, but I guess it does make me feel, like deep down that it does kind of make me feel bad you know, like she is somehow more Muslim than me, or at least seen as more Muslim than I am you know (31:299)*

Mona explains the ways in which as a woman, being Muslim impacts her thoughts and decisions, as well as leads to different standards that she is expected to reach.

> *Well I guess the British influence is kind of that we're all free and can look and wear as we want and feel comfortable, but the Muslim part is kind of saying that there is a specific, and I mean very specific way to look and dress… (14:131)*

> *… she* [her mum] *is quite narrow minded in terms of what she thinks is and isn't ok really, so even small things like nail varnish, my mum thinks that's not ok really so when I wear nail varnish she think it's wrong and rude, so her mindset is very different to me, you know like she has very rigid ideas on what is appropriate especially for the girls… whereas with my brothers its very different, my brother smokes, drinks, doesn't fast and doesn't pray, but my mum is very accepting of*

him you know, she often talks about praying for him and stuff, but we all know that he's doing this crazy stuff, coming home smelling of alcohol and stuff but when it comes to the girls wearing nail varnish is wrong (35:332)

Mona explains further the disparity she observes between female family members and her brothers.

I mean it's kind of just the way it is you know, like there has always been one rule for the girls and another for the boys, you know even growing up my mum was always giving me and my sisters chores while my brothers pretty much lorded around the house you know, they barely lifted a finger… like even now my brothers could be coming home at all times of the night, talking quite openly about girls and whatever else, whereas there I am worrying about if my knee length skirt is too short or if my nail varnish is offensive to other Muslims, its mad like the level of obedience that is expected because we're girls (36:340)

…my mum was always saying you know bear in mind the family name, bear in mind that women and men are different and bear in mind that the fact is we're not white… (37:353)

Mona reflected upon many challenges she felt she faced as a Muslim woman. It was interesting to see that these challenges were not necessarily in the big, bold decisions or situations, but were altogether much more basic and every day.

…I was going out with some friends for my birthday and we were all getting ready together, and I had two dresses there and I was thinking 'I wanna wear that dress' but then another side of me was thinking you know its super short and backless and I know that I really shouldn't wear something like that…(26:248)

…a few times I know my friends are going to a club it's their birthday, and I'm thinking 'argh I really wanna go', so instead I may just go for like an hour or

something rather than the whole 5 hours they're out raving for, you know….but it doesn't ever leave the back of my mind that I really shouldn't be there, but like I want to be there you know it's really a push and pull (26:251)

In order to manage some of these challenges, Mona speaks of the sacrifice she makes in the compromise.

…every time I go out to a bar or a club for a birthday party or whatever like that push and pull feeling that I was talking about before where I know that I really shouldn't be in that kind of place…you know like I know that I shouldn't be in the club, but I want to be so I kind of ignore that voice and quieten it down (31:292)

A point which Mona wanted to talk about towards the end of our interview was the way in which she perceived the world to be changing and the impact this was having upon her.

I've got colleagues at work who I've known for years and if there's something in Syria, or there's been a bomb or something, like in Belgium, I get slightly odd questions like 'are your family ok' or 'how do you feel', and I'm sort of left saying 'I can't speak on behalf of the terrorists'… (39:372)

…sometimes I feel I have to be the first to say 'oh my god that was terrible' sometimes I feel that I have to explicitly say 'I think that's disgusting, I don't agree with it' because sometimes if you're quiet I don't know if people are thinking 'does she, is she like them'…(39:379)

…the way the media portrays us [Muslims], *it's like if you blindly believed it all you could almost be anti-Muslim yourself… (41:396)*

Please see fig (3) for a diagrammatic representation of the main themes, a full table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.

Mona

Lucky to be British

A changing world

Judged by others

Sacrificing in order to manage

Religious

Challenges

Muslim woman

Unpredictable childhood
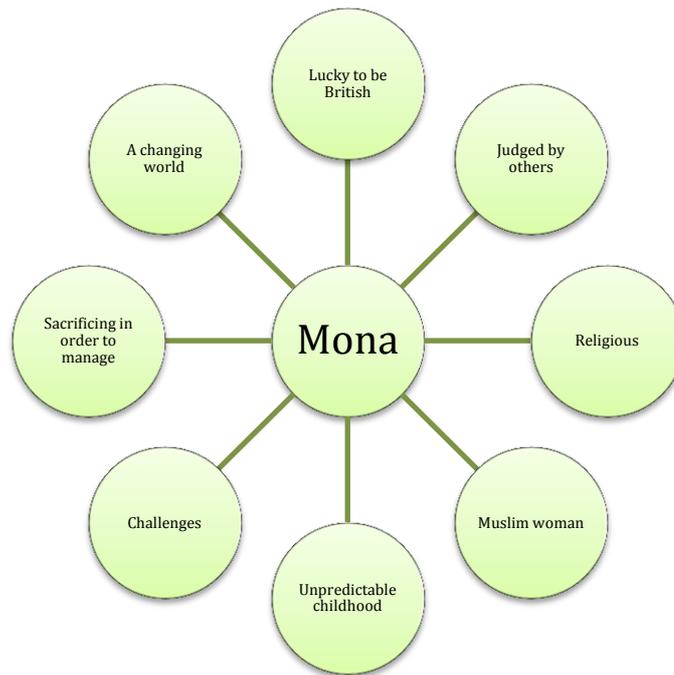
Fig.3: Diagrammatic representation of the main themes for Mona

3.3.4. Halima

Stage 2: Introducing Halima and narratives

Halima is a 31-year-old female living in London, of Algerian parentage, with both male and female siblings. Halima is currently working within the social care sector and is married with no children.

Throughout the interview, Halima spoke in a measured way with a steady pace and tone, with no stand out moment of particular animation. When listening to the interview and reading the transcript throughout the process of analysis, the general tone throughout is that of dejection and the sense of being outside of others; both in the UK where she lives, and in the birth country of her parents, which Halima often refers to as 'home'. The only moment throughout the interview in which Halima's tone is markedly more positive is when she speaks fondly of happy family memories and when discussing the positive impact she feels being British has had on her life. However, almost immediately after discussing the positive impact on her life Halima expresses that these life gains are not without cost, speaking of the

ways in which her privilege of being born in the UK often leaves her mocked as the 'spoilt English girl' by members of her extended family whom remain living in Algeria.

At multiple points throughout the interview, Halima speaks sadly of the experiences she feels that she missed out on because of her Islamic framework growing up, and conversely the intense guilt she feels when recalling times when she made decisions which she feels defy Islamic values. It seems that both when Halima has chosen to comply with Islamic expectation, or resist in favour of what she perceives to be the British expectation, she is left with internal conflict and distress. Halima eloquently describes that as "…two opposite parts of my brain that are pulling in opposite directions…it's like a battle over which half will win…" (line 242). It seems Halima is demonstrating that no matter what she chooses, there is a loss of some part of her that she must manage. Halima wears a hijab, and while she makes references to this as a conscious expression of her Islam, this was not a particularly strong narrative throughout the interview; neither did I sense this as a point of similarity between us.

Stage 3: Identities and identity work

Halima presents herself throughout the interview as someone who doesn't quite fit in, and someone who loses either way. She seems to be ultimately misunderstood by others - with her extended family living in Algeria seeing her privilege of living in London, whilst Halima herself acknowledged at least periods of financial hardship when her nuclear family have been supported by the benefits system within the UK. It seems that due to this lack of a sense of belonging, Halima ultimately sacrifices some part of herself on some level, in order to comply with either part of her identity. I was particularly struck by Halima's description; "…I think to be a Muslim is actually really hard…" (line 44), it seems that these negotiations and sacrifices are not always easy for Halima to manage. Most notably, during the interview Halima discusses her relationship with her non-Muslim friends, and seems taken aback when she realises that which remains unspoken between them. Halima notices that they never talk about the pollicised nature of Muslims within the global narrative, nor have they ever

discussed her religious beliefs and motivations. Halima comments that she had never previously noticed this, but comments that perhaps their lack of communication about these issues may allow the friendship to continue. This suggests that if these friends were aware of some of the challenges she experienced being a British Muslim, then perhaps the friendship would not survive. Whilst in the interview Halima laughs at this point, upon listening to the tape and reflecting upon this during analysis the use of humour seems uncomfortable. It seems that Halima comes to the realisation that perhaps these friendships lack depth due to the lack of transparency into Halima's experience of being a British Muslim, perhaps leaving these friendships lacking an authentic closeness.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

For Halima, growing up in the UK has offered her the sense that anything is possible, often due to the supportive structure she perceives within Britain, in the form of the education system.

> *…being British is like having ta sense that things are possible, you know, I can be whoever I want in the UK, if I wanted to be a doctor, we have free education at least until a point , and I can work hard and be a doctor you know (1; 3)*

> *…I had teachers in my primary school… and I remember really admiring them and feeling like they were really powerful women you know, they were really encouraging of us as girls... I think that really kind of gave me a sense of having a voice and stuff… (13; 122)*

However, whilst a childhood in London has encouraged Halima's sense of potential, when she returns to Algeria, she is often seen as spoilt for her British upbringing. This ultimately leaves her feeling alienated from her extend Algerian family, and her concerns dismissed as futile and unimportant.

…I'm kind of seen as the spoilt English girl…whenever I say my problems and stuff, they aren't really taken seriously, it's like what do I have to complain about you know… (3:24)

…when I'm there [in Algeria] *my family kind of mock me calling me the British girl, because I seem so different I guess…I don't speak the language very well, I dress differently, I have different interests, a different lifestyle… (22:206)*

This sense of being different to those around her was a common theme throughout the interview. Some of Halima's earliest recollections of feeling different to others were during her primary schooling, during which time she remembers instances of being teased by other children because her mother wore a hijab. As a child, in particular, it seems that this evident difference between her own mother and the mothers of her peers, and the implications this had in terms of her upbringing, was difficult for her to grasp and understand, leaving her feeling confused.

…my mum wore a headscarf and so when she would come and pick me up from school obviously none of the other kids mums looked like her, and I remember getting into an argument with one of the other kids who was teasing me cos my mum wore a headscarf…(7;68)

…I remember being a kid and the dinner lady putting sausages on my plate [eating pork is forbidden in Islam] *and I felt too shy to say that I couldn't eat them, and I remember sitting there and eating them because I was too shy to say anything and all the other kids were eating them too so I just felt like I should… (8; 76)*

As an adult, Halima remains acutely aware of the difference between herself and some of her non-Muslim friends. During the interview, Halima became aware of something which she had not noticed before within these friendships; that there seems to be a distinct lack of open discussion about the differences between their religious or spiritual belief systems. Halima

wondered if, in part, these relationships were in some way maintained because they avoided talking about issues that may be difficult to manage.

> *The interesting thing is though, I never really talk about certain things with my non-Muslim friends, like we never talk about politics and Muslims around the world right now, we never even talk about Islam and why I do and don't believe in certain things….I don't know what would come out if we did…(30; 277)*

Halima describes her Muslim identity as both liberal and also a conscious decision, perhaps opposed to being a faith that she has adopted because she was brought up within a Muslim family and household. For Halima, her religious affiliation and identity seems to have been something that she had worked on over the course of her adulthood.

> [referring to a radio show] *…they were talking about Muslim fundamentalists and I was thinking to myself, what does that really mean, to be a fundamentalist, is that to follow the fundamentals of Islam…well those are all the things I adhere to, does that make me a fundamentalist?...* [It was] *a really tough time working out who I was in my faith and I suppose where I stood (6; 51)*

> *…I choose to wear a headscarf and I chose to start doing that in my early 20s so I had a long portion of my life when I didn't and I actually started to feel uncomfortable with that lifestyle if you like, but yeah I present myself as a Muslim woman and that can lead to assumptions….but it is part of that choice in a non-Muslim country I guess (10; 94)*

During our interview, Halima reflected upon the period of her life during which she was negotiating her Muslim identity and her religious views. For Halima, whilst many of the decisions she made in this negotiation process are regrettable to her, she does not seem to feel that they define her negatively, rather she feels humbled by the process of realising that she is imperfect.

…I have done things which are very un-Islamic, especially when I was younger, you know I would go out clubbing and have boyfriends and stuff and lie to my family and while that isn't stuff I do now, I feel so bad whenever I think about that time in my life, you know just so guilty. Now Islam has a lot to say about forgiveness and stuff, and its not that I see myself as a sinner or a bad person or anything dramatic like that, but I do see myself as a person who has done stuff which I really wish I hadn't and that's really really hard sometimes but also very humbling, I suppose it just sort of makes me see myself as being very imperfect (9; 88).

For Halima, growing up within her Muslim family, she felt a distinct difference between herself and her male siblings. There seemed to have been a philosophy of 'one rule' for the males within the family and another for the females.

…the boys can really just get away with so much more, like some of my cousins very openly talk about girls and girlfriends and having sex… they're seen as jack the lads and like it's part of being a boy… as if things are beyond their control, you know, like as girls we choose to do things good or bad… (32; 295).

The spilt philosophy under which Halima was raised, between the male and female members of her family, seems to be starkly contrasted with other messages Halima was struck by, when she had particularly inspirational female teachers in her early schooling. However, Halima identifies with this sense of being 'split', feeling that who she is with others equally is separated into two parts.

…I think I feel a kind of push-pull most days…I mean how can there not be? You know there's a lot about British culture and life which just isn't ok in a, like from an Islamic perspective (7; 61)

…every time I'm at work or whatever and people talk about going out for the Christmas party, or after work drinks or whatever it may be, I kind of feel this little

pull inside you know, where I just feel like I really want to go but at the same time,

I feel like I shouldn't go to those places… but at the same time I want to, I want to

be part of the team and I suppose be the same as everyone else (18; 168).

As part of her negotiation and compromise between these demands upon her, Halima feels that there has to be sacrifice in order to manage such conflicting influences. Over the course of her life so far, this has included missing out on experiences which she wanted to have, upholding what she perceives to be family obligations by financially supporting members of her family abroad, as well as sacrificing her identity in order to appease another.

…When I was in school and college I knew I wanted to move into halls at uni…

but that was just not going to happen with my family… there was no way at all

that my parents were going to let me go to uni and live away like that… (2; 17).

…I send money home for my grandma, and whenever I go back I always help out

my cousins that struggle the most, and that's kind of like my duty or, maybe not

duty, but obligation you know… it hasn't always been easy because actually at

times it has felt stifling (15; 142)

…when I was about 17 years old I was in college and I was actually pretty

popular, I had a big group of friends and I was just having fun I guess…I was

drinking and lying about it to my family making up excuses, stealing money from

my mum so I could go out with my friends…but I remember around that time

almost feeling ashamed of being Muslim… [at that time] *in some parts of my life,*

my social life and college and stuff, things couldn't have been better, I was

popular, people wanted to see me and spend time with me and I really felt like I

had a lot of friends, but I felt like in order to have that I had to kind of give up the

side of me that was Muslim… (25; 237)

Interestingly, Halima felt that over time the way in which she experiences her British and Muslim identity has distinctly shifted.

…when I was growing up I really felt being British as like my sanctuary, you know British freedom, and like the Islamic side of things was really suffocating and unfair but as I've grown up that has changed especially as a woman

Researcher: In what way do you mean?

Well I guess I'm just over the whole idea that as a woman we have freedom...we are constantly told that women can wear whatever they want to wear, that the length of their skirt is their decision…until their skirt is floor length and they choose to cover their hair, then it's a different story…my freedom to choose is somehow hard to understand because it's a different choice to the majority, I dunno that just doesn't sound very free to me… (33; 308)

Please see fig (4) for a diagrammatic representation of the main themes, a full table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.
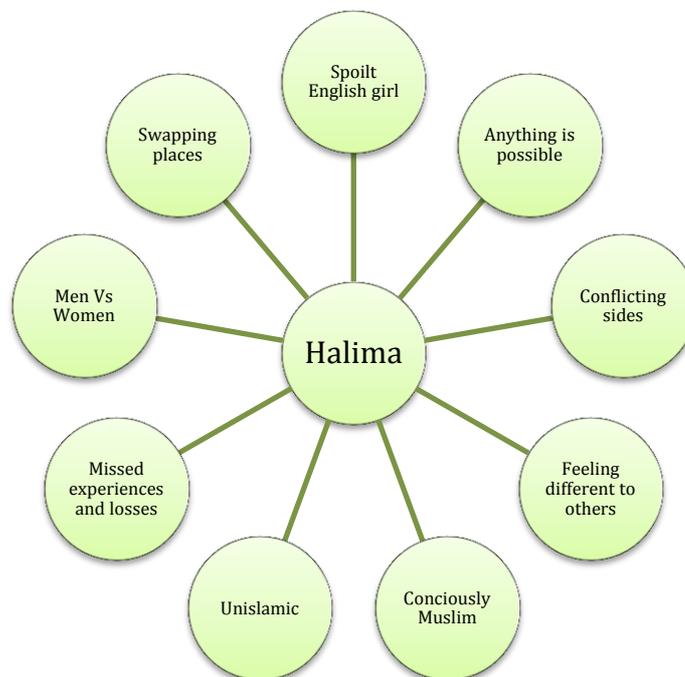
Fig 4: Diagrammatic representation of the main themes for Halima

Stage 2: Introducing Khadija and narratives

Khadija is a 45-year-old woman born and raised within London, of Somalian parentage. Khadija is the eldest of her siblings and she is married with a teenage son and daughter. Khadija is not in any paid employment, although she engages in voluntary work within the Islamic community.

Throughout the interview, Khadija spoke in a calm and measured tone, and is particularly softly spoken. The overall tone over the course of the interview is of someone who feels very assured with where they are, Khadija spoke during our time together of her journey with her faith since her teenage years through to adulthood, and how her own research and education of Islam has allowed her to feel less torn between two cultures - British and Somalian. Rather, she identifies herself as Muslim first and has chosen to dismiss many of the Somalian cultural traditions that she was brought up in during her childhood.

Khadija spoke of feeling some uncertainty in the raising of her children during a time when she felt there were more cultural pressures for them to be like their peers, than when she was growing up. Khadija seemed to feel torn between enforcing her strong Islamic beliefs and values upon them, whilst also feeling concerned that she did not want to knowingly make them different to their friends, and also wishing them to have freedom to explore life for themselves.

Stage 3: Identities and identity work

Khadija presents herself as someone who is very assured of her position on her faith and how she expresses this within her lifestyle and life choices. Her identity as a mother is prominent throughout our interview, and much of the conflict to which Khadija refers to is in relation to her teenage children, and how she is able to balance Islamic guidance with allowing them the freedom of self-expression. This seems to cause Khadija the most concern

and confusion, and seems to be the biggest area of negotiation between her British and Muslim identities. Khadija describes herself as a strict Muslim, devout in her faith, choosing to distance herself from the cultural rituals and ties of her parents' Somali culture, feeling that in some way the Somali traditions she was raised with dilute and manipulate Islamic principles. I wonder if perhaps this stripping of cultural ties and traditions, if truly possible, is a by-product of her devotion to a more purist Islamic experience and expression, or if rather her commitment to the more purist Islamic perspective was an attempt to reconcile the conflicting cultural messages she received.

Khadija describes her friends as falling within groups of being "…either quite strict in religion like me or others are much more relaxed and maybe a bit more Western…" (17; 213). For Khadija, being 'Western' was reflective of their decision making, she gave example of going to bars or dressing 'immodestly'; this makes me wonder how Khadija would define me in terms of these rigid boundaries, and what this may have meant for our own narrative.

Stage 4: Thematic priorities and relationships

Khadija started our interview by talking of the opportunities that are afforded by living in the UK. For Khadija, these seem to be mainly focused on the opportunities which she sees to be available to her children.

> *…I suppose being British means that my children have all the opportunities they can really, they can go to school and college… (1; 3)*

> *…even though I didn't go to college or university or anything, my children are doing that and that's a massive positive, the education opportunities for people here is so important… (2; 24)*

For Khadija, she also feels that being British strengthens her experience of being Muslim.

…I think being British means that I can practice my religion, I can wear an abaya (traditional Islamic dress) *and a hijab without too many problems, which in some other countries we can't do that as Muslims you know (1:56)*

…if we weren't in the UK even if we were in other counties in Europe I don't know if we would be able to practice Islam like we can here, so being British in some way kinda way lets me be better at being Muslim (3; 32)

Khadija reflects on being the child of parents who moved to the UK during the 70s, and subsequently now having her teenage children born in the UK, she refers to herself as part of the 'generation in between'. Reflecting on the strong ties her parents felt towards Somalia, whilst she herself struggles to feel strongly connected to either Somali or British culture.

…my parents had such strong ties with Somalia, they had a really strong cultural identity and they had stronger cultural traditions than they really had religious traditions…but I feel like I'm sort of in between you know, I have strong ties with my religion, growing up in the UK sort of meant that I had to teach myself about Islam cos it wasn't all around me like it was for my parents but I also have strong ties with UK culture, and my kids even more so, so I guess I'm trying to balance it all, and that's difficult cos sometimes it means that I feel torn between two cultures while not really feeling connected to either very strongly (2; 16)

Khadija further emphasises this point describing the mixed messages she would receive as a child from her parents.

I remember too, when I was about 6 years old my parents trying to act British in public, but they would be extremely Muslim at home, my parents were very very religious and like I said they were very culturally traditional…

Researcher: What do you mean by acting British?

Well I remember my dad calling everyone 'darling' and 'love' and basically they would watch shows like Eastenders and try and speak like that with people, but then they would come home and kind of rubbish British culture, they'd say things like 'have you seen the way the girls dress at number 4' or whatever, you know just being very disapproving, even things like listening to western music or fashion was very frowned on at home, so I always felt like an imposter… (5; 62)

For Khadija, she found that her parents' cultural traditions stifling as she began to feel resentful at the burden of religious and cultural obligation.

…when I was a lot younger I was very resentful and felt so stifled and I became quite rejecting towards Islam cos I felt like it was unfair that I didn't have the freedom that I saw other people, my friends who were non-Muslim enjoying… I was constantly acting, when I was with my parents I was a Muslim, devout in my prayer, helping my mum in the kitchen, doing all the things that I should have been doing, but when I was outside I was British, or what I felt like I should be as a young person growing up in the 80s… (18; 232)

… as I kind of entered my late teens and early 20s I started researching Islam cos my parents at home were kind of weighed down by lots of cultural stuff that wasn't necessarily Islamic… even though I was born Muslim and my parents made me wear a hijab and stuff when I was very young I didn't understand why I was wearing it, so as a teenager I was resentful, I couldn't understand why I had to look different to all my friends at school and my parents didn't have the words to really explain it in a way that I was able to understand (9; 114).

By engaging on a journey of learning more about Islam and reflecting on her faith within this religious framework, Khadija felt that boundaries were able to be established within which she felt she was able to reintegrate her identities into her sense of self, describing herself as a strict Muslim.

I can now see myself as a whole person, a more genuine person, who is British and Somalian but is actually Muslim first, so rather than feeling town between backgrounds I feel like I am more whole and together as a Muslim and I choose to live my life within those rules (7; 80).

Whilst Khadija foregrounds her Muslim identity, she remains open about engaging with both her Muslim and British identities concurrently.

…I just feel so confused and sad with what is happening in the world right now, you know sometimes I feel like Islam is so disrespected and that as Muslims we're treated so badly…I feel like I can't work out who is on the right side but it's so sad that lives are being destroyed… (4; 50)

…most people I think look at me and assume that I'm like a recent immigrant to the UK…and obviously I have a very English accent which surprises people…

Researcher: Do you think people are surprised when they talk to you?

Oh yeah for sure, I remember going to like my children's parents evenings or getting involved with school governors meetings when they were very small, and you literally can see the surprise on people's faces… (11; 143).

Whilst Khadija feels she challenges stereotypes of her appearance as a traditionally dressed Muslim woman, she also has finds it challenging to be with other Muslims, due to 'Muslim superiority'.

…I find it difficult to be really connected or close to them [Muslim friends she meets through the Islamic centre] *really cos sometimes they have what I call Muslim superiority, where they kind of say as if being Muslims makes us better than other people… that kind of makes me defensive and just kind of out of place with them really (17; 209).*

Khadija talks of her children throughout the interview, describing feeling most conflicted when making decisions that involve her children and how she and her husband choose to raise them.

… I have children so I often feel conflicted by, I suppose, what I want them to do from an Islamic perspective and the freedoms I want for them to explore and express themselves from a British perspective… and it's difficult because I want to protect them, protect their modesty, their integrity but also I know how difficult it is to not be the same, you know to be so different from your friends (10; 124)

… My daughter is 13, she wants to start wearing makeup, she has no interest in hijab, the clothes she wants me to buy her are becoming more and more revealing because that's what is popular now…. But at the same time I don't want her to drift away from Islam or do things that she will regret that can't be undone… (10; 130).

For Khadija, a primary concern was for her daughter as opposed to her son, due to the ways she felt males and females were inherently different and the social expectations of them.

Well my son, if he goes out and gets a girlfriends, has sexual relations before marriage… that doesn't have to become public within our community, he can go on and get married with no problems, or even if he doesn't want to get married people don't question that too much, you know, but with my daughter or not even just my daughter, but with girls in the Muslim community, there is a lot of focus or like highlight on chastity, maintaining your virginity until marriage, in some countries on the day after the wedding linen is even checked to see if the girl has bled

Researcher: ok

And that isn't strictly Islamic, but the principle is. Refraining from all premarital sex is so important, it's a girls reputation that not only reflects on her but also the parents family… so who do we protect more? Obviously the girl (15; 187).

Please see fig. 5 for a diagrammatic representation of the main themes, a full table of themes and subthemes can be found in appendix I.
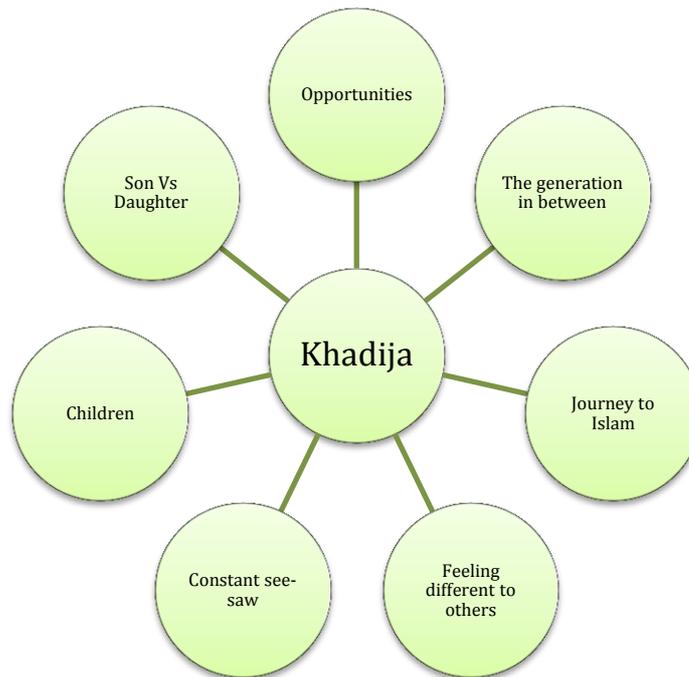
Fig. 5 Diagrammatic representation of the main themes for Khadija

Part 2: Introduction

Part two focuses on an integration of stages five and six of CNA (Langdridge, 2007), presenting the conceptual themes that permeate the analysis. Two overarching, connected constructions will be discussed; these are the construction of the Muslim woman and the construction of the British Muslim, which were underpinned by a gender inequality narrative. According to the CNA model stage five involves turning a critical eye on the text gathered to engage with a political critique of the text (Langdridge, 2007). This stage aims to produce an "alternative perspective on the phenonenon… grounded in sociocultural discourse" (Langdridge, 2007, p.137). I will focus on the text from a feminist perspective as well as offering cultural contextualisations, in line with the model. Stage six of CNA is a critical synthesis of findings, whist there is no explicit prescriptions of this stage Langdridge (2007) reminds the researcher to privilege the voice of the individual over that of the researcher or theories used.

<u>3.4. Integration and discussion</u>

"It is an individual's story which has the power to tie together past, present and future…"

McAdams, 1988

The aim of this research was to explore the ways in which British Muslim women contain and negotiate the dual identities of being both British and Muslim. At the start of this research journey, I was specifically interested in the way in which British Muslims describe and understand these identities and how they interact on the individual, subjective level. The narrative methodology that I used produced copious amounts of rich data, and during the process of analysis and write up I experienced a change in what I felt to be most the important aspect of this research process. It became important to me to not only honour the narratives that were shared, but also to be able to use this research as a way to challenge some of the dominate social narratives about Muslim women in Britain today. It became increasingly important to me that my research extends beyond the clinical room, and instead

have benefits for the larger community (Milton, 2010). This is in line with the philosophy of social justice, a movement that calls for the fair distribution of advantages across society, regardless of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation or religious beliefs (Fouad, Gerstein & Toporek, 2006). Traditionally, Counselling Psychology has demonstrated an interest in issues of social justice (Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Ivey & Collins, 2003), often addressing these issues through advocacy and working to empower disadvantaged populations to challenge oppression, marginalisation, discrimination and injustice (Fouad, Gertein & Toporek, 2006). Due to widespread societal problems, such as the increase in so called 'Islamic' terrorism, as well as a rise in Islam related social exclusion and discrimination, it is vitally important that Counselling Psychologists are able to have a sophisticated understanding of these social challenges, how they directly impact the client base we service and our role in affecting change.

This research also aims to challenge the way in which we, as Counselling Psychologists, engage with religion and the religious practices of our clients. With the recent socio-political concerns around 'Islamic fundamentalism', there has been increasing question as to the societal value or even risk of religion. Richard Dawkin's (2006) book, titled 'The God Delusion' presents the belief in a God as irrational, a position that some psychologists may share, seeing this belief as a groundless defence that forms part of the clients pathology, or as irrelevant to therapeutic practice (Coyle, 2010). This fundamentally contradicts the underpinning philosophical structure of Counselling Psychology. The founding principles of the discipline rest upon egalitarianism and a holistic approach, and require us to examine and engage with the clients meaning making systems, such as religion, in the same way as we may consider the impact of their sexuality on their presentation (Coyle, 2010). Current Counselling Psychology training may address issues of cross-cultural therapeutic practice, yet often neglect issues of spirituality and religion (Coyle, 2010). This research gives the practicing Counselling Psychologist, as well as other health professionals, an insight into the

way in which religious ideology and religious framework can contribute to ones experiences of their own identity and the way in which they relate with others.

As a Counselling Psychologist trainee, my training lends itself to the search for subjective understanding rather than universal answers (Rafalin, 2010). However, as I occupy this role as a researcher, I have had to recognise the practitioner within and restrain myself from considering my participants as clients or service users, and avoid working towards formulations based on the narratives presented. To identify the dual identity within myself as a Psychologist, as both a practitioner and a researcher, is to identify the tension that this implies. I have had to hold this in mind during this process, as this research does not aim to explain, but rather prioritises an understanding and exploration of the phenomenon.

3.5. Summary of identity work

The women who participated in this research differed widely in terms of age, background and stage of life, with some participants being married with teenage children while others were at the tail end of undergraduate education. This may have had an impact on the types narratives shared, and subsequently, the kind of person the narratives constructed. All participants expressed recognition of the opportunities they felt they gained due to being British, this included opportunities to be educated and financially independent from family members and a freedom of self-expression. Participant's identification with Islam varied from a 'strict' Muslim to a 'modern' or 'liberal' Muslim, often defined by financial freedom as well as having 'liberal' views. All participants described situational social exclusion and isolation from the non-Muslim community within the UK, although often participants also experienced similar feelings of exclusion from the Muslim community. This was often linked to being 'too British' or a perceived negative judgment based upon a seeming lack of compliance with Islamic teaching. All participants expressed a gendered narrative throughout; this included a focus on female reputation, virginity and the social and behavioural expectations of woman compared to men. Of the five participants interviewed, four expressed a need to sacrifice one

identity in favour of the other in order to reconcile conflicting identity expectations. In line with the case study nature of CNA, I have presented a summary table of themes and subthemes, for individual participants in appendix I.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, I have formulated these findings into two broad overarching constructions; the Muslim woman and the British Muslim, which were underpinned by a narrative of gender inequality. As the gendered narrative was particularly salient throughout my research, across all participants, who range in age, education history, marital status, as well as other variables, I have taken this as an indication of its importance across this group. Therefore, I propose that these constructions do not exist in isolation within my dataset, but rather there is an overlap with gender-based inequality as a feature of constructions of both the Muslim woman and the British Muslim, see fig 6.
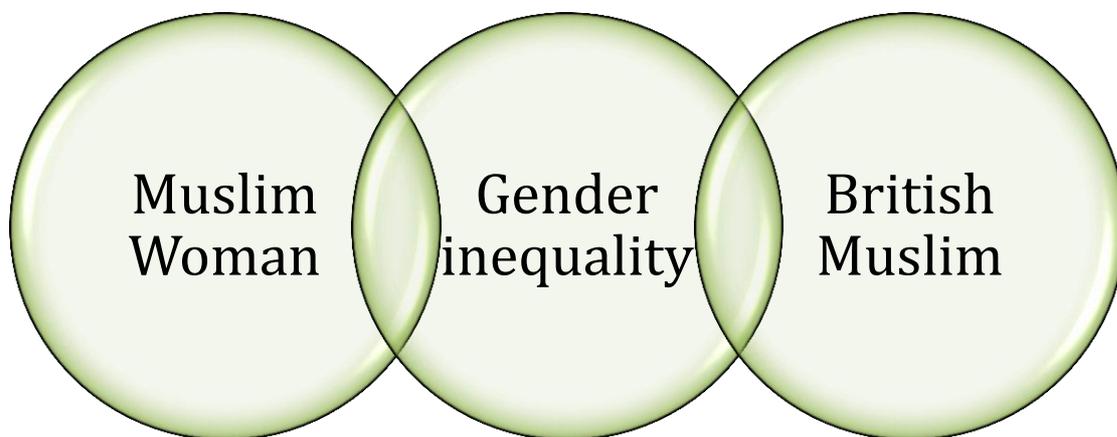
Fig 6. Outcome of analysis.

The rest of this chapter will focus on each of these in relation to the research findings and available theory.

3.6. Gender inequality

"…my mum was always saying… bear in mind that women and men are different…" (Mona; 32:352)

The purpose of this research was never to engage in a debate over the role of gender in identity formation or negotiation, neither was it to explore the impact of gender on the experience of British Muslims. However, I began to notice the presence of a gendered narrative across participant interviews at a very early stage of the research process. In the first interview I conducted, Layla spoke of the female reputation "…so in the Muslim community, there is this whole big thing about reputation and being a girl…" (line 250). Whilst Layla reports to personally disagree with this, she also goes on to explain her concerns when befriending males, out of fear that they would be seen together and this would have negative social implications for the family. Further, Layla also describes her brother as 'religious' explaining that "…my brother is very very, like, we don't talk to women… he tries to avoid any sort of, any sort of possibility for him to have to integrate with women…" (line 329). From this, we can see that for Layla to be 'religious', and compliant with Islamic teaching, also means maintaining a distance between males and females. If one were to behave in a way which did not conform with this, by having male friends and being seen by members of the community, it would have implications not only for the evaluation of ones 'religiousness' but also for the family as a whole, due to the 'spoiling' of the female reputation. The concept of reputation is closely linked to honour, which is often linked with female sexuality (Kocturk, 1992), however reputation is also linked to rumour. Layla alludes to this when she refers to being 'seen' with a male friend, suggesting that by being seen by a member of the community this could be repeated to others. Conceptually, we can think of the role of reputation as a method of policing women, and rumour as the method with which the policing takes place (Faqir, 2001). Similarly, Sara spoke of the gendered expectations over the choice of clothes she wears "…to have my shoulders out, as a Muslim woman especially, is scandalous…" (line 29). Mona shared similar experiences around clothing and 'covering up'

the female body, "… I was thinking 'I wanna wear that dress' but then another side of me was thinking, you know it's super short and backless and I know that I really shouldn't wear something like that…" (line 249). This is closely linked with what is deemed 'appropriate' under Islamic ruling in terms of female clothing, and is discussed further within the construction of the Muslim woman and the relationship with concepts of the Islamic hijab.

Narrators often described the way in which their assigned gender inherently resulted in expectations of behaviour and seemed to put them in direct subservient relationships with male counterparts. My participants' spoke of a gender based inequality between females and males, be it siblings, cousins or partners. They recalled the ways in which parents and family members accepted, and even expected, behaviours from males that would be deemed inappropriate for females, "… they're seen as jack the lads and it's part of being a boy…as if things are beyond their control, you know, like as girls we chose to do things good or bad…" (Halima, line 295). Here, Halima was specifically referring to the male members of her family being excused for engaging in pre-marital relationships, something that would be forbidden for the females. There were also further domestic expectations for the female family members that males seemed to be exempt from.

"… You know, my brothers didn't have to do anything really around the house…" (Sara, line 215)

"…my brothers pretty much lorded around the house you know, they barely lifted a finger…" (Mona, line 341)

This feminine-masculine divide is often seen in traditionally Islamic cultures, with a number of traditional Islamic and Arabic proverbs glorifying masculinity, with men often considered 'guardians' of their female relatives (Faqir, 2001). Femininity is often constructed as 'good' and 'sweet', while also favouring conforming to 'appropriate' gender roles (Faqir, 2001). It is, in part, these socially constructed gender roles that act as a means of facilitating this form of gender inequality. Gender inequality can take many forms, from differences in access to

health care provisions, education opportunities as well as pay for similar or comparable jobs (Lorber, 2010). While it would be easy to consider the gender inequalities described by my participants as being an example of male patriarchy within the Islamic faith and Islamic communities, this would be too simplified and reductionist, as gender based inequality and discrimination exists beyond Islamic contexts. We have seen an example of this recently within the academic sector, with a major strike of University lecturers in the UK over gender based pay inequality (Weale, 2016).

We can think about these issues of gender from a clinical perspective, and my own clinical experiences within sexual health may be valuable to consider. Since I joined the field in 2011, I have personally seen a drastic shift in how young women, in particular, relate to themselves as sexual beings. I have noticed an increase in young females entering my clinical room describing sexual interactions as being 'beat' by a male partner, a term that is often used in colloquial slang in London to refer to sexual intercourse. I recall the first instance a patient described her sexual experiences in this way, and the reaction this induced in me as an older female; feelings of shock, disappointment and even disgust at the derogatory and degrading conceptualisation of the act of sexual intercourse. It strikes me that perhaps as part of our sexual liberation as women, we have not been particularly liberated at all. Rather young women have been given the illusion that sex is *done* to them, and likened to degrading, physical violence, in essence, a consensual sexual exploitation. Equally, from a clinical perspective, I have been struck by the discrepancy in service provision between male and female service users. Within my service alone, we currently have two clinical sessions per week aimed at MSMs (men who have sex with men); these services turn away any women or men who identify as heterosexual. Whilst I support the service provision for at risk minority groups, I feel that it is worth noting that there are no lesbian equivalent services, indeed all services aimed at women revolve around contraception, so called 'family planning'. This focus on female contraception is significant, primarily as this seems to imply the responsibility of avoiding pregnancy rests with the female

partner, so much so that an entire service (often known as Well Woman clinics) are provided to ensure that a female is successfully able to avoid pregnancy. From my experience, these services are often focused on contraception only, with a lack of interest in other areas of female sexuality, such as sexual health or sexual satisfaction. Conversely, MSM exclusive services are often holistic in nature, with a focus on safe practices whilst also recognising the importance of sexual satisfaction. This is a crucial point to consider as a Counselling Psychologist, as this highlights an area of inequality around service provision. Not only does this lend itself well to values of social justice, in terms of service provision inequality and inequity, but also this consideration of the construction of sex, sexuality and gender is therapeutically important. If we were to see a female service user within our practice who, for example, had been the victim of a sexual assault, we would need to consider the impact of her subjective understanding of her female sexuality, her role as a woman, and who she is as a woman, amongst the many other factors we consider in a psychological formulation.

Within the methodology chapter, I explained some of the challenges faced with recruitment from non-academic sites. It is relevant to discuss this here further, and to consider this as my own gendered narrative as a researcher. Whilst there may be many reasons behind why I struggled with accessing these Islamic based institutions, I wonder to what extent my gender had an impact on these outcomes. As explained previously, I contacted all potential recruitment sites (with no response) via my City University email, which contains my name. I have a very traditionally Arabic and Islamic name, and it would not have been difficult to assume that I was a Muslim female. Based on Islamic practice and etiquette, I wonder if there may have been some reluctance to invite a Muslim female to meet with members of the congregation in a one-to-one interview situation. Particularly, as such a situation without the presence of what may be considered an Islamically appropriate chaperone, would be considered unsuitable or Islamically forbidden.

I wish to draw the readers attention back to my opening quote, by my participant whom I have named Mona; *"…my mum was always saying… bear in mind that women and men are*

different…" (Mona; 32:352). Of course women and men *are* different, biologically, physiologically, however, in my study, the messages received of the ways in *which* they are different, and the far-reaching implications and meanings of this difference had greater importance.

3.7. The construction of the Muslim woman

"…but yeah I present myself as a Muslim woman and that can lead to assumptions…."

(Halima: 10; 94)

Throughout the process of transcription, analysis and write up I have been struck by the way in which my participants attended to the meaning of the Muslim woman. The narrators own negotiation of this concept within a religious and social sphere was both prominent and vivid throughout all interviews. This negotiation was multifaceted with a tone of defiance and rebellion, contrasted with that of abject acceptance. The participants seemed to relate in different ways to the concept of the Muslim woman, and this may be in some part due to some participants engaging publicly with their religious identity through the wearing of the hijab. For some participants, there was no denying their Muslim woman identity, worn externally through the hijab. Whereas, for other women, this was a more internal construct, not worn externally. The nature of this research does not allow for comparison or generalisation, however, I remain curious of the way in which the wearing, or non-wearing of the hijab may have impacted constructions of the Muslim woman.

For some, the role of the family was implicit in their defining of what they *should* be as a Muslim woman. This is in line with many theorists who consider that the way in which people become gendered individuals is intimately tied with the cultural process of socialisation, gender role learning and gender stereotyping (Elliott, 2007). This would lead us to see the family as an immediate and primary social and cultural community within which these processes could occur. We can see this when Layla spoke of the expectations of her family and the importance placed on her 'reputation' as a female. This concept of female reputation,

and indeed 'honour' does not only exist within the Islamic context, but rather can be found in many traditionally non-Muslims societies, such as Spain, Portugal and South Asia (Kocturk, 1992). While Layla does not talk specifically of her reputation in relation to her sexual behaviours, she eludes to this by suggesting that there would be potential negative outcomes to being 'seen' with a male friend. It is important to contextualise this for Layla, whose parents were both born and raised within Egypt. Within the social context of Egypt, the family's honour is considered to be dependent upon the sexual 'purity' of its female members (Al-Khayyat, 1990), with deviation from this resulting in widespread honour based violence (Khafagy, 2005). Whilst honour related violence has been condemned by many Islamic scholars, this does not take away from the presence of the honour based discourses in all discussions about the gendered nature of Islamic 'purity' (Jamal, 2015). There remains an emphasis on female 'chastity and purity' as a representation of the families 'honour', with little to no reference to 'male purity'. The Egyptian legal system prioritises the reproductive role of the female, assuming that men take on sole responsibility for the financial provision of the family (Khafagy, 2005). This was particularly the case for Sara, who noted that the gendered disparity between herself and her male siblings and cousins, was also present within her marital relationship, and the cultural expectations of her as a wife. For Sara, this included the expectation that she would not work, and her husband (also born and raised within Egypt) would be the sole provider for the family. Sara's rebellion against these local social norms, leaves her ridiculed by the members of her extended Egyptian family, as well as her Egyptian in laws; "In a very conservative Islamic country like Egypt, where women are often seen and not heard, I'm told that I'm the disrespectful English girl, because I ask my husband to do things or disagree with his opinion" (Sara, 4; 53). For Sara, this rebellion, and rejection of these culturally engrained and imposed concepts of honour and respect are interpreted as a rejection of a singular construction of the Muslim woman. This rejection demonstrates that, at least in some situations, it is acceptable that some Muslim women choose to comply with religious and cultural norms regarding dress and behaviour, whilst

others may choose to disregard these prescriptions with no sacrifice of their Islamic beliefs or community (Jamal, 2015).

Within my research, the presence of a disparity between the socially defined expectations of females compared to their male counterparts was prominent in all interviews, this included for the participant who I named Khadija. Khadija was my oldest participant, at least nine years older than the rest of my research cohort, and was the only participant to have children of her own. This gave Khadija a unique perspective. While the other participants described the ways in which cultural norms and expectations of them as females were placed upon them by the family, or the wider community, Khadija spoke of her role in this in relation to her children. Thus, in many ways Khadija was herself implicit in perpetuating these gendered norms. Khadija reflected on the importance of chastity, virginity and the avoidance of pre-martial sexual intercourse for females, as it was felt that virginity could be 'proven' in females by the bleeding of the hymen on the first sexual encounter of the wedding night. This is in line with previous research, in which premarital virginity was seen as an obligation for females despite the Islamic doctrine indicating that this was important for both men and women (Musso, Cherabi & Fanget, 2002). For Khadija, it seemed logical, based on these assertions, that her daughter would be the one the family chose to 'protect' "... it's a girls reputation that not only reflects on her but also the parents family... so who do we protect more? Obviously the girl..." (khadija, line187). There is no medical definition of virginity (Amer, Howarth & Sen, 2015), however, Khadija seems to be referring to what may be understood as the socially constructed meaning of virginity - something which can be 'kept', 'lost' and therefore 'protected' (Amer, Howarth & Sen, 2015). It is important to contextualise this further, and note that Khadija's parentage is originally from Somalia, and throughout the interview Khadija acknowledged the impact that cultural traditions had upon her and her experiences of Islam. Somalia is a country that, alongside others, practices female genital mutilation (FGM), with reported figures of up to 96% of women aged 15-49 years having undergone the procedure (WHO, n.d). The practice of FGM is a demonstration of deeply

entrenched societal gender inequalities, where by parts of the female genitalia and/or clitoris is partially or totally removed or injured for reasons including, the 'control' of female sexuality, for the increase in male sexual pleasure, as an initiation into womanhood, for 'hygiene' or aesthetic reasons and, in some countries, as a prerequisite for the right to inheritance (UNFPA, 2015). Whilst this was not explicitly discussed by Khadija, nor was this asked, it is important to contextualise the narrators particularly where this too may impact the construction of the female.

Whilst Khadija was the only mother to a daughter, all my participants were daughters, and we can think of the impact of the mother daughter relationship on their identity development as Muslim women. Based upon Object Relations' theory, object relations feminists, such as Chodorow (1978), argue that families create gendered children, and if this family is organised in terms of the mothers 'mothering' and the fathers' dominance, this creates different relational needs in male and female children. Chodorow (1978), suggests that for female children, identity development is an inhibited process due to the inability to overcome the early identification with the mother, resulting in the female child never fully developing into an adult woman with a full sense of herself (cited in Craib, 1998). For Chodorow (1978) "A girl does not simply identify with her mother… Rather mother and daughter maintain elements of their primary relationships which means that they feel alike in fundamental ways…" (pg 110). This relationship is maintained in this way for a number of reasons, and not just due to a shared sex. Rather, the mother finds herself depended upon by the 'needy' infant child, who in turn, reflects back to the needy infant part of herself that she has had to repress as part of her own development into adulthood (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983). Through these early interactions with the baby, the baby is able to develop a sense of omnipotence and security, as the mother is in a state of 'primary maternal preoccupation' (Winnicott, 1971; Gomez, 1997). Over time, the role of the mother becomes to meet the needs of the child whilst simultaneously teaching the child how to repress these needs (Craib, 1998). Winnicott's (1963) proposal of early development is inherently social, and from this perspective, we can

see the importance of the context of the mothering in the development of the female identity. Based on these early childhood experiences with the mother, the female child learns to split off and repress the dependent part of herself and to neglect her own needs in favour of meeting the needs of others; particularly those needs of adult men and children (Craib, 1998).

We can apply these theoretical propositions to the participants presented here. The women all described a gendered inequality and subservience to male counterparts, based on an expression of female sexuality. There was an element of danger associated with ones sexuality for these women; for Layla female sexuality was policed through the concept of 'reputation', for Sara her exposed shoulders evoked a public reaction and was seen as a 'scandalous', and for Khadija her daughters virginity needed to be 'protected' by the family. So rather than being an innate and normal element of humanity, sexuality becomes conceptualised to have the power to destroy the family or oneself, in the case of honour related violence. Therefore, the mother now must unconsciously teach the female child to repress her needs in favour of the needs of others, but also she must repress her tempting and seductive sexuality. If this is successfully integrated into the self-concept, female children may grow into adult women fearing their own sexuality and sexual functioning, in relation to men who's sexual desires and functioning are "beyond their control". The experience of female sexuality in this way may result in feelings of shame and guilt around the presence of these urges. Equally, if the Muslim female were to go against these conceptualisations of female sexuality and engage in pre-marital sexual relations, this would inherently mean a disobedience to God, which in turn could result in psychological distress. Sara describes similar feelings of guilt coupled with intrusive thoughts when she would engage in the 'forbidden' acts of being in nightclubs.

Similarly, Chodorow (1978) suggests that women often seek to fulfil the need for love, originally met within early childhood by the mother, through close relationships with other women. I have discussed Laylas narrative around female reputation in terms of the role of

rumour and previous research suggests that rumour spreading is often carried out by other women (Faqir, 2001). Equally, Mona described her relationships with other Muslim women as a matter of comparison, and perhaps even competition. In these contexts, the relationship with other women cannot be considered safe, as in these cases women can be both judgmental, persecutory and rejecting, as well as have the power 'taint' ones reputation and social standing within the community. This further isolates the Muslim woman; men are to be distanced from in order to protect ones reputation, whilst women are waiting to both police and punish ones religiosity.

3.8. The construction of the British Muslim

"…being a Muslim is hard in Britain because we're labelled for the wrong reason and labelled in a negative way" (Sara; 9; 123)

All participants within this study narrated on feeling misunderstood, left out and different to many of the people around them. The relationship with others was often complex, with conflicting feelings towards Islamic teaching and other Muslims, as well as towards non-Muslim peers. There was often a political element to this, with Layla becoming particularly passionate about the expectation she perceived that as a British Muslim she needed to publicly condemn so called 'Islamic' terrorism in order to prove her 'Britishness'. Similarly, Layla, Sara and Halima all identified specific examples of when they had felt they had been discriminated against due to their Muslim identity. The experience of anti-Muslim discrimination is, unfortunately, a common report within the academic sphere (Afshar, Aitkens & Franks, 2006; Moghissi, 2006). However, whilst the expression of feeling different to peers and ones non-Muslim network was discussed extensively by participants, there was also a sense of dissimilarity with other Muslims. For some the moral judgment from other Muslims was particularly difficult to manage, named by Mona as the 'Haram Police'. Haram is an Arabic term that refers to that which is Islamically forbidden, and Mona uses to term to refer to other Muslims she experiences as 'policing' religiosity. In a similar way, Halima also

describes the way in which she is branded a 'spoilt English girl' and Khadija refers to a 'Muslim superiority' that she believes exists within the Muslim community. The manner in which the narrators experience their interactions with those around them is significant, as in knowing something of our prescribed group we are able to know something of ourselves (Lawler, 2014). In this way, individuals are aware that they fit into classified groups, such as 'Muslim' or 'British' and their behaviours may be based, in some part, on what they know of these groups (Lawler, 2014). Hacking (1999) suggests that ones identity is informed by the lens that society constructs of that identity. So, for these participants there were instances when the social construct of 'Muslim' informed by their peers, seemed to be incompatible with their expressed behaviours, for example being a Muslim woman within a pub or club setting. This conflict results in a sense of inadequacy and guilt, implied by intrusive thoughts of "I shouldn't be here" or religious flaws being exposed by the 'Haram police'. Individuals attempt to reconcile such internal conflicts, and I propose that this was achieved through the concept of the 'liberal' or 'modern' Muslim. For my interviewees, when they spoke of their liberal religious standpoint, they seemed to be referring to an embodiment of Islam. This included disagreeing with traditional, perhaps more fundamentalist Islamic philosophy and teaching. For some, this was captured by the adoption of non-traditional western dress, and choosing to not wear the hijab, whereas for others this was captured by the conscious way in which they practiced their Islamic faith - focusing on the choice to be Muslim, rather than an adoption of the faith based on parental tradition. These ways of conceptualising one's liberalism are vague and abstract, as well as vastly subjective for each individual. Having worked through the research process I have found myself coming back to this term, and wondering if identifying themselves as 'liberal' served a negotiating function between what are often perceived as incompatible identities. By referring to oneself as a 'liberal' or 'Modern' Muslim, one is able to bypass socially constructed notions of the Islamic extremist, whilst suggesting an evolved Islamic expression. For this sample, a liberal or modern Muslim identity allowed for the identity flux between Muslim and British identities, by engaging with elements of both.

"It's almost like being Jekyll and Hyde, you are one way there and another, and when I say there I mean with my Muslim friends or Muslim community or whatever, and a different way when I'm with my non-Muslim friends" (Sara, 19; 268).

Sara's use of the famous literary characters of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is quite striking and powerful. It gives the image of a split between who she presents to different populations, with a concealed, almost invisible, thread linking the two together. For Goffman, we constantly play different roles, the sum of which equate to what we would identify as ourselves (Lawler, 2014). It is not enough to just perform these roles, it is also important that we are *seen* to perform these roles. Goffman calls this dramatic realisation (1959), an example of this would be someone on a first date who talks about their most impressive achievements, or someone who works in the corporate industry who takes great care with their business wear attire. Does meeting a lawyer or accountant dressed smartly in a well fitting suit, with a tie, cufflinks and a briefcase make them a better lawyer or accountant, or is this part of their performance of these respective roles? Equally, this brings up the hijab, alongside other overt symbols of Islamic religiosity. To position the hijab in this way is not to doubt its religious or spiritual significance for the wearer, nor is it to suggest that the wearer is dishonest in their intentions of wearing the hijab. Rather, Goffman suggests that much of the behaviours done for the benefit of the social group to which we belong are not necessarily conscious processes, instead these can occur outside of consciousness (Goffman, 1959; Lawler, 2014). Goffman (1959) acknowledges that of the many roles that we occupy, and indeed perform, some of these may well be contradictory in nature; this forms a part of what Goffman called discrepant roles. In his writings, Goffman (1959) distinguishes between various types of discrepant roles; I am most struck by what Goffman refers to as the 'go between'. The go-between, sometimes referred to as the mediator, is able to switch between two groups giving the impression to each that they are loyal to one over the other. If these two groups are incompatible or otherwise opposed, as presented here in the groups of 'British' and 'Muslim', then the go between may be able to move between these groups giving a favourable

impression of the other group which they occupy, therefore fostering a closer relationship. To contextualise this, let us think of some of the narratives presented by these participants, particularly the presented duality of so-called Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Perhaps as a British Muslim by moving between these groups, one is able to give an impression to non-Muslim British group members that one is 'liberal' and contrasting to the extremist presentation of Muslims on many platforms. Equally, by freely practicing ones Islamic traditions and religious practices, one is able to communicate to Muslim group members that Britain is liberal in its acceptance of the Muslim community. The conflict arises when one is in the presence of both of these groups, Sara specifically describes this situation "… if we're all in a group and the two collide [Muslim and non-Muslim social groups], I suppose I'm then a totally different way…" (Sara: 14; 268). This situation is described by Goffman (1959) as "…a wonderful display, not unlike a man desperately trying to play tennis with himself" (page 93).

Theories of social categorisation have been discussed within the introduction chapter, particularly that of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) the process of intergroup distinctions is three pronged; of social categorisation, social identification and social comparison. The social categorisation process involves the mental categorisation of individuals into different groups; this could be Muslim, British, police officer and so on. Social categorisation is a way of categorising objects in the world so that we know and understand them; an example of this may be the hijab as a way of being identified within the group as a 'Muslim woman'. Similarly, as part of social identification, we adopt the cognitive and behavioural elements of the identity of whatever group we consider ourselves to be a part of. Here we can consider Mona, when she spoke of social gatherings with friends, while in these social setting she maintains the cognitive and behavioural elements of her Muslim identity by avoiding alcohol and instead having non-alcoholic drinks. This self-categorisation is particularly important for self esteem, self-consistency and self-regulation. The final stage of social comparison, involves the comparison made between one's own social group with others, this helps to facilitate the

self-identity as well as the boundaries between others and ourselves. We can see this when Khadija refers to Muslim superiority "…Muslim superiority, where they kind of say as if being Muslims makes us better than other people…" (line 209). We can see that in-group members (Muslims) strive to see their group positively compared to the out-group (non-Muslims). Therefore, by comparing oneself as a Muslim with what we understand of non-Muslims, or vice versa, we are able to differentiate more clearly where the line is between Muslims and non-Muslims based on shared characteristics. Due to this unconscious process, we can become dismissive of in-group diversity (Penning, 2009), and exaggerating of the intergroup differences (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The implications of this can be to become dismissive of the range of religious experience amongst the Muslim population. We can see this described by Mona, who was the only participant within the group to describe herself as not fitting the 'stereotypical' image of a Muslim; within Monas own social categorisation and social identification process she has an image of a Muslim woman that she does not fit. Mona describes that this leaves her feeling unfavourably about herself, which may result in an internalised concept of being a 'bad Muslim'.

However, Social identity theory suggests that while social identities can be influenced by meaning-making systems, such as religion, membership to other groups in society will typically reduce the commitment to this identity. From this it can be deduced, that for second generation Europeans, the more memberships held in other social groups the less significant the religious group identity becomes (Goli & Rezaei, 2011). However, the perceived or real threat of discrimination can lead to further psychological distress associated with identity conflict and result in isolation from the mainstream community. All of the participants were born in the UK, and held other social group memberships, yet of those women who openly shared a narrative of religiously motivated discrimination, none of them expressed isolating themselves from the mainstream British community. In this way Social Identity Theory oversimplifies the process of identity construction, as is minimises the role of individuality and fails to acknowledge the negotiation of group identity as complex, involving both intra-psychic

and group processes (Huddy, 2001; Postmes, Spears, Lee, & Novak, 2005). Similarly, this model fails to make a distinction between identities that are acquired and those that are ascribed, perhaps at birth. While all of the participants in this study were born into a Muslim family, some participants described a consciousness to their Islamic faith, often described as a journey of researching and learning about Islam before 'deciding' to be Muslim. The concept of an acquired identity, which would be even more salient in someone who had converted to Islam, poses a challenge to Social Identity Theory, due to its lack of acknowledgement of autonomy and 'choice' in identity process.

Within this research, the participants self identify as belong to at least two social group, that of Muslim and British. Within the introduction chapter, I discussed the various contributing factors that may result in the values, norms and behaviours of these identities being perceived as in conflict with one another. To integrate such conflicting identities is likely to be cognitively taxing, therefore these conflicting identities are mediated and resolved in other ways (Ashford & Mael, 1989). In order to consider this from an alternative theoretical perspective, I refer back to Identity Process Theory, a model that suggests that identity is a dynamic social and psychological process. Central to Identity Process Theory is the concept of identity threat; if the social structure changes and resulting in identity threat then an individual will engage in a coping mechanism to reduce this threat. Therefore, within this research is an acknowledgement of the socio-political factors that have impacted the perception of the Muslim, such that being Muslim may be experienced as a threat to ones identity of being British. In order to cope with this identity threat, I have proposed the emergence of the 'liberal modern Muslim'. This sits well within Identity Process Theory, as this suggests that as a result of receiving new information about ones Muslim identity (assimilation-accommodation), participants re-evaluate their identity contents in line with various motivating principles, resulting in value to religious identity being either inflated (in the case of Khadija) or deflated.

The women in this study were five functioning members of society, all of who had been through the education system, worked in paid and voluntary employment, maintained friendships irrespective of religion, and contributed to the communities in which they live. However, within the narratives these women shared with me were stories of inequality, discrimination, isolation and sacrifice. They engage in a process of letting go of parts of themselves because they are unfavourable to the community they are engaging with at that given time. This is relevant not only for Muslims or British society, but for the world. There is a very real threat from so-called Islamic extremism attacking society indiscriminately. The more we allow for the intergroup divide between Muslim and non-Muslims the more we may be pushing vulnerable members of society away from us. Research tells us that belonging to the homogenous 'suspect' group of Islam, coupled with perceived or actual discrimination, increases the likelihood of the isolated Muslim seeking 'relief' by joining extremist terrorist organisations (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002; Al Raffie, 2013). If we do not work to challenge discourses of discrimination, then we are implicit in the silent polluting of our community. Mona summarises this, "…the way the media portrays us [Muslims], it's like if you blindly believed it all you could almost be anti-Muslim yourself… (36:396).

Within this chapter, I review the research as a whole, focusing on the application of the research findings to the field of Counselling Psychology and therapeutic practice, as well as the implications of the research beyond this. I will end the chapter by summarising the limitations of this study, suggested areas for further research and I will close with a reflexive summary.

4.1. Applications to Counselling Psychology

During the process of my extensive research into the Muslim population, I have come across the practice of Islamic Counselling. This model of counselling practice is based within the tenants of Islam, the Quran and the teachings of the Prophets, and this model would suggest that its Islamic principles could be used when working with the British Muslim population. I have grappled with myself in deciding to what extent I wish to refer to Islamic Counselling within this thesis and I have struggled with stepping away from my own subjectivity regarding Islamic Counselling. Whilst I acknowledge the presence of the practice of Islamic Counselling, and its benefit for some people, I am reluctant to align myself with any model of therapy which propositions to work with a singular group in society in a singular way. As a trainee Counselling Psychologist, my training leads me to believe that this may take away from a pluralistic, individualised, formulation driven approach to therapeutic work. Similarly, I feel concerned that a 'Muslim' counselling serves the purpose of further segregating the Muslim community, and perhaps even pathologising this group. I have consciously chosen to omit any recommendation of models of therapy when working with the British Muslim community; the research did not seek to achieve this. Instead, I will explain the ways in which the findings of this research are applicable to Counselling Psychology practice and beyond.

When evaluating the presented study, perhaps the most important point of reflection is to consider its implications on the academic field and practice of Counselling Psychology. The

importance of this is twofold; primarily, it is important to acknowledge the context within which the research is embedded; as part of the requirements for the fulfilment of a professional doctorate in Counselling Psychology. Secondly, the British Psychology Society recognises the Psychologist as a scientist practitioner (2005), alongside the increased focus on evidence based therapeutic practice, we can see the fundamental dynamic between research and therapeutic intervention (Rafalin, 2010).

At a fundamental level, an important outcome of this research is that it allowed the opportunity to illuminate the complexities of identity negotiation for the women interviewed. The findings from this study suggest that, for the women interviewed, there was evidence of psychological distress associated with the negotiations of their dual national and religious identities, evidenced in feelings of anger, guilt and intrusive thoughts. For these women, this distress was linked with the social construction of the Muslim woman and the British Muslim. While we are unable to generalise across the British Muslim population based upon this qualitative research, we can deduce from this the importance for the practitioner Counselling Psychologists working with this community to assess issues of gender construction and religious ideology in therapeutic formulation. The gendered narrative that permeated throughout all interviews indicated the prominence of gender related power inequality and socially constructed norms for this group, and it would be imperative to consider these issues when formulating mental health difficulties in the female population (Moradi & Yoder, 2012).

I believe that this research has been successful in challenging some of the ways in which the popular discourses around Muslim women in Britain are conceptualised. As individuals in the helping profession, it is important that we are able to step away from discriminatory popular discourses and think about this group from a broader perspective, and I believe this research offers this opportunity. As Counselling Psychologists it may be an oxymoron to say we must consider issues of diversity and multiculturalism; we may even see this as part of our brand slogan differentiating us from other psychologist professions. However, we have to go beyond issues of diversity, equality and multiculturalism and dare to dip our toe into broader

issues of discrimination, equity and social justice. The UK Women and Equalities Committee (2015) recently published figures that suggest that Muslims are more likely to be unemployed than any other group in the UK; with unemployment figures of up to double that of the general population (12.8% and 5.4% respectfully). This figure is even greater for Muslim women, with unemployment up to 65%. A report in 2015 by a cross party think tank suggested that Muslims are less likely to hold managerial or professional positions compared to any other religious group (Demos, 2015). These figures are difficult to contextualise, due to the lack of data on Muslim groups; however, they do tell us that not enough is being done for this group in society. Perhaps more worryingly, a report in 2007 suggests that Islam related discrimination, or Islamaphobia, contributes to health disparities (Laird, Amer, Barnett & Barnes, 2007). This means that's an individuals meaning making system, their religious beliefs, statistically makes them more likely to be unemployed or experience difficulties in accessing appropriate mental health care provisions (Laird, Amer, Barnett & Barnes, 2007). I believe in a society where we have to be concerned about being offensive and politically correct, we have learned to fear religion rather than embrace difference. My own experiences in therapy reflects this; I have been a client to a therapist who looks tentatively at my headscarf, making no mention of my religious beliefs in my own therapy, even when I have brought it up. A fundamental aspect of the Counselling Psychologist training and practice is to engage in ones' own reflections, perhaps through mandatory personal therapy, so it is important to acknowledge ones' own prejudices particularly of potential client groups. By challenging the popular discourses, and also illuminating a voice that is often unheard amongst popular British Muslim narratives, this encourages practicing clinicians to do this with other client groups. The more we fear issues of religion, the more we engage with the sensationalist political discourses of the 'extremists' Muslim as a community to be feared and never to be trusted. As Counselling Psychologists, we owe it to our discipline and to our clients to engage with issues of religion without fear. To admit when we don't know, and be curious of the differences between us. With this research, I have attempted to show how as a second generation British Muslim living in the cosmopolitan capital of London, identity

negotiation is complicated, exacerbated by current political issues. As practitioners we could be sat in our clinical room, faced with a client just like one of my participants. If we do not explicitly discuss and engage with their religious beliefs, we would miss out on the wealth of information that has emerged within this research, including issues of female sexuality, personal understandings of womanhood and conversely manhood, interpersonal relationships, gender based inequality and identity negotiation.

As a profession and division, Counselling Psychology is growing and the scope of the role is increasing in line with this, such that we will subsequently have opportunities to impact service design and provision. As I have attempted to argue in the early phases of this thesis, the political dimension of the Muslim construction is likely to becoming increasingly complex in the future. In this way, I believe this research will be valuable to the individual Counselling Psychologist practitioner working with their individual service user, but this is also important from the perspective of service provision. This is not an issue of multiculturalism. My participants are British. Born in London. I am British. I wish to emphasis this, as it is all too easy to sweep this population into issues of multiculturalism, to consider people as British Pakistani, or British Arab. Yes, parental country of origin may be relevant, but it also may not be. Laird, Amer, Barnett & Barnes (2007) suggest a move to 'anti-religionism' within health care provision in the UK, identifying the importance of the development of health services that meet the needs of the Muslim population, particularly within the current anti-Muslim discourse in order to improve health outcome. This is an area that a Counselling Psychologist would have the key skills from our training to be able to have a direct impact in service development and evaluation for this group.

Over the course of my own clinical training there have been a number of global tragic terrorist events with large death tolls, many of which have been attributed or claimed by so called 'Islamic' terrorist organisations. With each incident, I wonder what the impact is on the Muslim in their daily living. From my own experiences, with each incident I feel an increase in the burden on my shoulders and silently wonder what the tone of the office discussion may

be. After each incident, I question the reason why the seat next to me remains empty on the tube. I doubt these internal musings, which I seldom disclose to others, are unique to me. This in turn makes me wonder what impact we may see in the future for the many millions of Muslims living around the world, and how this may present in our clinical rooms.

Finally, I feel incredibly proud of the direction that this research eventually took. When I was planning this study I had battled with myself for months, feeling that I had to have a sample of both men and women in order for my research to be valuable. As I have discussed in the methodology, the natural evolution of the research led me to focus on the female voice. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no qualitative studies that address this research question, and I feel that it is very important that attention is paid to the female voice. My literature review found only study of significant similarity to mine, carried out by Dwyer (2000), over 16 years ago at the time of the writing of this portfolio. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no previous similar research from the Counselling Psychology discipline; therefore I believe that my research presents a new and unique contribution to the current literature. I feel very privileged that I have been able to be the researcher to do this.

4.2. Limitations of the present study

This study aimed to explore the negotiation of identity among British Muslim women. Due to this broad research aim and small sample size, at best the research findings may be able to provide insights that can be taken away and considered in respect to individuals of a similar presentation. The data I was given by my participants in the stories they shared was rich and fascinating, however the generalisation of findings was never an aim of mine as the researcher. The chosen methodology, Critical Narrative Analysis, tends to be time consuming by nature; therefore breath of sample tends to be sacrificed in favour of depth (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This has remained as a particular point of disappointment for me, and even during my transcription of the interviews prior to any analytic work, I had often wished that I had been able to recruit more participants such was my excitement at the rich

data I was gathering. Equally, had I not been limited by time constraints, I think a second interview may have allowed for the development of narratives, as well as allowing for the checking of credibility (Elliott, 1999 cited in Willig, 2013). I am particularly tentative with this suggestion, as in some ways this could be seen in contradiction with the CNA methodology, as Langdridge (2007) puts a strong focus on the idiographic nature of the methodology and suggests case-study work as ideal. From this position we can see that the CNA is less concerned with issues of creditability. Nonetheless, I feel that a second interview may have allowed for narrative development, which may have been provided further depth to the research.

Whilst I have acknowledged the focus on a female sample and that I felt that this was beneficial for this particular study, it is equally important to acknowledge the lack of the male perspective in the narratives. I went through multiple channels in order to try to recruit male participants, all of which were unsuccessful. I have reflected within the methodology chapter in more detail on some of the challenges that I came across with recruitment. However I believe that a least some of these issues were to do with my being a female researcher. I had not anticipated that being a lone female asking to interview males alone, might be a source of discomfort for potential participants. This meant that I was a Muslim female interviewing female Muslims, particularly noted as I am a hijab wearer and so overt in my Islamic faith. This ultimately leads to a sense of shared identities, which can, in turn, result in the assumption of shared ideas and experiences. This leads me to question what narratives would have been co-created had I been a different researcher. Archer (2002) explored the interactions between the social positioning of the researcher as well as that of the interviewees, and how this can impact the types of knowledge produced. In Archer's study, participants reported that they felt more at ease due to the shared gender and perceived ethnic background with the researcher. However, Archer (2002) concluded that this both assisted as well as disrupted opportunities to explore the research topic.

Issues of validity are contentious within qualitative methodologies, and it is largely recognised that questions of reliability, representativeness and generalisability often posed to quantitative methods, are not meaningfully applicable to qualitative research (WIllig, 2013). Instead, Yardley (2000) suggests that there are four characteristics of good qualitative research; 'Sensitivity to context', 'Commitment and rigour', 'Transparency and coherence' and 'Impact and importance'. I am drawn to these guidelines as I feel that they are flexible enough to be adapted, and I also appreciate the highlighting of the impact of the research, as I feel this is particularly important with the research here.

I am a British Muslim woman, and this makes me personally sensitive to the context of this research. Equally, this could impact my objectivity as a researcher. Therefore I made every attempt to bracket off my subjectivity by consciously engaging in regular reflexivity and engaging with the broad literature on the research topic. This allowed me to become acquainted with the discourses around British Muslims and identity negotiations. Ethical issues have been considered throughout in order that the research is ethically sound and sensitive to the participants. Equally, the very nature of CNA methodology repeatedly emphasises the importance of prioritising the voice of the participant over that of the researcher of the theories used.

'Commitment and rigour' is demonstrated throughout the research, and particularly highlighted within the methodology chapter. This is supported by the in-depth engagement with the topic area, reviewing a breadth of related research and engagement with the phenomenon during interviews and analysis. This was not always particularly easy process for me personally, due to the proximity of the research topic to my own life. However, I ensured my own psychological wellbeing and safety by engaging in regular therapy, peer support and reflective writing. This allowed me to process my own reactions to the phenomenon, which have been relevant in the CNA methodology, and re-engage with the topic and phenomenon.

'Transparency and coherence' can be divided into two parts. Coherence is demonstrated in the suitability of the theories and methodologies used for addressing the research topic. This is seen within the methodology chapter, as I have justified the chosen methodology over alternative choices. Transparency is evidenced in the analysis process as well as my open and honest reflexivity. Equally, I was aware that I was going into the interview setting as a hijab wearing Muslim woman. As I was interviewing other women, it would have been deemed Islamically acceptable if I had removed my hijab for the interviews. However, this would have been an unethical deception of my participants. Therefore, I was transparent in my own engagement with Islam during interviews, as well as after.

'Impact and importance' is, personally, the most significant of these evaluative measures. The women who participated in this research not only gave their time, but also gave a part of themselves in the open sharing of narratives and experiences that have caused them discomfort. This required courage and generosity. Producing research that can have a clinical and social impact is a vital part of ethical research.

4.3. Ideas for future research

The present study was planned with the aim of exploration of the research questions, and when evaluating such studies new research ideas are borne and new avenues for exploration are identified. In the first instance, I believe that it would be beneficial if the study presented here were replicated with a researcher of a different background as I would be curious of the narratives that would be co-created between researcher and participant. Equally, I wonder what may be found if a similar study were conducted with a sample from different parts of Britain, and if the political landscape of London, which is often different to other cities, would impact experiences and narratives. Further, as I have discussed, I would be most excited by a similar study conducted with a male sample. I managed to interview one male, and the stark difference in the narratives and the articulation of these narratives left an impression upon me. Similarly, if one were to carry out a different methodology, I

wonder how a group of men and women, perhaps in a focus group setting, would discuss their experiences, and what narratives would be presented. As I have eluded to, I also believe it would be important to be able to investigate the interaction of the social positioning of the researcher and participants further, perhaps with researchers who were not overtly identifiable as Muslim. Further to this, the split sense of self was an unexpected account by narrators, and I feel this would be an important area for further exploration. It may be useful to look at this at an even younger population group, possibly focusing on young people and the impact of this distancing of parts of themselves on their sense of self.

Similarly, I am a bi-lingual British Muslim, while I would describe my first language as English; I am fluent in dialects of Arabic, and I often struggle to find words in English that I can easily locate in Arabic. I did not disclose this to my participants, nor did I enquire about their spoken languages. However, the discursive foundations of narrative methodologies lead me to wonder what narratives may have emerged, and been co-constructed, had this been made explicit. If participants spoke the same second language as myself, would they too have found the words in Arabic that they may have been able to find in English? I remain curious about this, and think this is an avenue that could be developed further in future research.

4.4. Conclusion

This study focused on British born Muslim women, and invited participants to share their stories with me in order to explore their negotiation of these identities. The study produced key findings across these narrators, which were explored in terms of the experience of gender inequality, the construction of the Muslim woman and the construction of the British Muslim. The implications of the study were for both Counselling Psychology clinical practices as well as in terms of broader social discourses. As with all research, there were several limitations of this study, and these were both acknowledged and explored.

If I were to take a step back and think about this research, not as a researcher nor as a Counselling Psychologist but as a person, my ultimate aim was to give these women the opportunity to tell their stories. To tell their stories of the challenges involved in navigating their way through a very difficult time in society. I sincerely hope that I honoured their voices and did them justice.

4.5. Reflexive Summary

As I have mentioned throughout, reflexivity has been a central component during this process, which has occurred throughout; at times without intent. However, similar to the critical narrative analysis stage of 'critique of the illusions of subjectivity' this final reflexive summary is an opportunity to explore the way in which the research has impacted my own practice (Willig, 2008).

My journey to this point has been both demanding and arduous. Both during the core taught component of my clinical training, and after during the write up of this research. I have had moments of utter confusion and stuck-ness, feeling overwhelmed in my own chaos. I recall the beginnings of this feeling during the initial planning of my research, years ago now, as I tried to focus my mind on what it was I was actually searching for. I was given the advice to go away and to step away from the course; to imagine that my research was not a component of this qualification and find my voice. It was after this that I was able to find clarity, and reintegrate myself as a future psychologist with a naturally curious mind and a researcher. I have gone back to this advice multiple times over the years, both in and out of the clinical room. I have learnt to step away from the pressures that I lay on myself to be a particular type of therapist, and allow myself grow and develop into *me* as the therapist.

It is not outside of my awareness that my research topic is close to me, and I have often silently wondered if in researching this area I was somehow trying to find myself. I have at times felt suffocated by this, burdened by that which I was submerging myself in and questioning my decision of research area. With each terrorist tragedy I felt my heart grow

heavier; feeling a twang of embarrassment as I introduced myself to new people, knowing my hijab and Arabic name 'gave me away'. With each tragic media image of a displaced and murdered child of Syria I felt my own turmoil, the presence of both anger and shame feeling simultaneously close and far from those suffering.

I recall an occasion, when I was speaking to a friend who had completed her own training some three or four years before myself. She told me that she believed that in writing her research, she felt she became a better therapist. I spent months going back to this, both in disbelieve and in fear that this would not be my own experience. However, as I draw this chapter of my training, and indeed my life to a conclusion, I believe this has made me a better therapist. I have dared to face that which often people fear. I have tried to find the courage to look within myself, my community, to talk to people who have vastly similar and vastly different lives to myself and I have dared to be open, curious and ask questions. It may be the naivety of a practitioner 'fresh' training, but that sounds like the foundations of a Counselling Psychologist to me.

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Appendices

A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study on your experience of negotiating your dual identity being a British born Muslim.

Your participation would involve attending for one interview with me, which will be approximately 60 minutes long, and happen at City University.

All interviews are entirely confidential and your participation will be anonymous.

Light refreshments will be provided.

For more information about this study, or to take part, please contact:

Mariam Tarik (researcher): █████████████████

or Dr Aylish O'Driscoll (supervisor): ████████████████

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee on 020 7040 3040 or via email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study on your experience of negotiating your dual identity being a British born Muslim.

Your participation would involve attending for one interview with me, which will be approximately 60 minutes long, and happen at St George's University.

All interviews are entirely confidential and your participation will be anonymous.

Light refreshments will be provided.

For more information about this study, or to take part, please contact:

Mariam Tarik (researcher): ████████████████████

or Dr Aylish O'Driscoll (supervisor): ████████████████████████

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee on 020 7040 3040 or via email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee, City University London and St Georges University of London. Ethics approval numbers *[PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17] and [SGREC15.0007]*

Appendix C: Email sent to non-academic sites

To whom it may concern

I am writing to you to enquire if your (organisation/Islamic Centre/Mosque) may be able to support me with my research. I am a trainee Counselling Psychologist studying at City University, London. As part of this doctoral course, I have to complete and original piece of research. I have designed a study into the way in which British Born Muslims negotiate dual identity within this current political climate. I have attached my poster for you to review at your convenience.

Research has indicated that the position of 'Muslim' is often opposed to that of 'British' somewhat suggesting that the views are opposing. Previous research has indicated, in other populations, that this can have a negative impact on mental health and well-being. Given the current political climate, I am interested the way in which British Muslims manage the two identities within their own mind. My study has been granted ethical approval from the City University Ethics Board as well as St George's University of London Ethics board, and is compliant with British Psychological society guidelines. I am currently recruiting from City University and St Georges University of London.

I am happy to discuss my study further with you and answer any questions that you may have. I would be most interested in my posters being displayed in any communal areas and if you think there are particular members of the Islamic centre that would be interested in a an interview with me, then passing on my details.

I would greatly appreciate any consideration you could give to this, and look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Mariam

Mariam Tarik

Counselling Psychologist (in training)

Appendix D: Interview schedule

Preliminary interview questions/topics

1. What does it mean to you to be British? Can you describe what its like?

    a. Are there any instances that you can think of when being a British has presented challenges?

    b. Are there any aspects of your life that you feel being British has contributed positively to you?

2. What does it mean to be Muslim? Can you put into words what it means to you to be Muslim?

    a. How would you describe your religious identity?

3. For you, do you feel there is any conflict between your British and Muslim identities?

    a. Can you tell me about a time when you first became aware of the difference in your identity?

4. How important is being Muslim in terms of how your identify yourself?

    a. How does this contribute to how you see yourself?

    b. How does this impact how you present yourself to others?

5. How would you describe your British values?

    a. Where do you feel these came from?

6. How would you describe your Muslim values?

    a. What influenced or shaped these values?

7. Can you describe any instances when you have felt your British and Muslim values in conflict?

8. Can you tell me about the times that you feel 'most' British?

9. Can you tell me about the times when you feel 'most' Muslim?

10. Can you tell me about a time when you feel you had sacrifice either your British or Muslim identity in favour of the other?

11. Tell me what its like with your Muslim friends?

     a. How is it different to when you're with your non-Muslim friends?

     b. How do you manage this difference?

12. Tell me about your family-how would you describe your family?

     a. How does this contribute to how you see your British and Muslim identity?

13. How do you balance being British with being Muslim?

     a. Can you think of an example of when you have had to do this?

     b. Has this ever felt conflicted within you?

14. Is there anything else that you feel would be important to add?

Prompts:

- I wonder if you could explain that in a little more detail.

- What are your thoughts/feelings about (….) now?

- I wonder if you could try and put into words what (…) means to you?

- Why do you think that is the case.

Appendix E: Participant Information sheet

CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

Title of study: A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research project is part of a doctoral degree in Counselling Psychology. The study aims to explore how British Muslims negotiate dual identity in the current political national and international climate.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are over the age of 18 and identify yourself as being both British born and Muslim. The study aims to recruit eight to nine participants to take part in the research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you can decide if you wish to participate in part or all or the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project, up until one calendar month post interview or until data analysis has begum, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. Choosing to take part in this study or withdrawing at any time will not affect your grades with the University. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

- You will be invited to take part in one 60 minute interview and given the opportunity for a debrief interview.
- The research study will continue until all participants are recruited.
- You will meet the researcher for the interview, but you will be contacted beforehand in order to arrange a convenient time for the interview to take place and to brief you on the study, and given the opportunity to meet for a debriefing interview.

- Interviews will be semi structured and one on one. You will be asked to share your experiences and views on the research topic. You will not be required to give any personal information but you will be asked basic demographic data.
- The data collected will be analysed using critical narrative analysis. Narrative analysis focuses on how existence is experience, understood and interpreted through language. Critical narrative analysis builds upon this by introducing elements of social theory.
- The research will take place at a booked room at City University at a time that is convenient for you.

What do I have to do?

If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to attend for a semi structured interview with a researcher. This interview will be fairly informal and we are interested in your views and experiences of being a British Muslim in London.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

For some people, the issues discussed in this research project can be sensitive and they may find it difficult to discuss. At times it can be useful to talk this through with someone who is interested. If you chose to take part in the study and you found any of the issues discussed upsetting you could stop the interview at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits of taking part in this research. There is not much research into British born Muslims concerning dual identity, and participation in the research could valuably contribute to the knowledge base that we have about this community. Additionally, information from this research could benefit they way we work with patients from this community. Further to this, this study give participants the opportunity to discuss an issue, which we may not always talk about with someone who is interested in your story and experiences.

What will happen when the research study stops?

Audio recordings will be destroyed after the transcription process. Raw data will be stored in a password-protected file on a password protected computer. All data will be destroyed after three years.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- The researcher alone with have access to raw data that is yet to be anonymised. Once data is anonymised and the study is written up it may be made available through publication.
- All audio recordings will be recorded on an encrypted digital recorder and stored in a locked cabinet and password protected file.
- All data will be encoded using alphanumerical codes, so no identifiable information will be made public.
- Data will be stored for three years post the study, after which time it will be deleted.

- All data will be treated as confidential information, restrictions to this is reporting violence, abuse, self-inflicted harm, harm to others and criminal activities.
- All records will be stored in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be made available in the thesis for a doctoral degree. The study may also be written up for publication in relevant Counselling Psychology journals, throughout any publication process all data will remain anonymised and no identifiable information will be included for publication. No identifiable information will be made available to the public. If you wish to receive a copy of any publications please give your contact details to the research to arrange.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide that you no longer wish to continue with the study, you are free to withdraw at any time up until the point at which data analysis has occurred, without explanation, penalty or negative consequence.

What if there is a problem?

You will be given the email contact details of the researcher and research supervisor, if there are any problems please feel free to contact either one of them.

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, City University London has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims.

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee, approval number [PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17]

Further information and contact details

██████████████████ or ████████████████

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix F: Consent form

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Title of Study: A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims.

Ethics approval code: [(PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17]

Please initial box

1.	I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records. I understand this will involve: • Being interviewed by the researcher • Allowing the interview to be audiotaped	
2.	This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s): • Doctoral Psychology thesis • Possible future publication I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.	
3.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project, up until data analysis has occurred, without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
4.	I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
5.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Please initial box

Appendix G: Debrief form

CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

A qualitative study into the negotiation of

dual identity among British Muslims.

DEBRIEF INFORMATION

Thank you for taking part in this study! Now that it's finished we'd like to explain the rationale behind the work.

This research study aims to explore the way in which British Muslims negotiate dual identity of being both British and Muslim. There has been previous research into the way in which Muslims born abroad who have moved to the UK adapt to UK culture; however there has been little research into how individuals who were born in the UK blend their identity of their nationality and religious beliefs, particularly within the current political climate. This research is concerned with understanding how British Muslims are able to balance their Islamic beliefs and identity with what it means to be British on a political and social level.

Some of the issues discussed during the interview can be sensitive and may raise concerns. If you have any concerns and would like to talk to someone, please feel free to contact The Samaritans for telephone support on 08457 90 90 90 or via email jo@samaritans.org. Alternatively you can contact your GP to arrange an appointment to discuss further.

We hope you found the study interesting. If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to contact us at the following:

████████████████████ or ████████████████████

Ethics approval code: [PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17]

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Appendix H: Sample analysis transcript for Sara – red refers to coding for thematic analysis; black refers to coding for tone, function and other noting.

Participant B

156 certain rules and I will follow those certain rules. Even though like earlier I said I was liberal and stuff, I will still try and practice as

157 much as I can. And try and remember it, the religion is always at the back, or shall I say at the front of my mind before anything that I do,

158 I erm, I go to the Muslim handbook shall I say (laughing) to see if its permissible or not. So it's very important, very important hands

159 down.

160 R: Ok so, I wonder if you can tell me a little bit more about that, you mention particularly about the term liberal? Can you

161 explain that a little more?

162 P: Ok so simple things like prayer, prayer is one of the 5 pillars of Islam yeah, it is compulsory. There is no question about it. Erm, I like

163 to say that I pray. But honestly, I do slack sometimes, I'm not proud of it, but it happens, it's the truth. So, for me to call to call myself a

164 devout Muslim, I don't think that I can, erm, what's the term? I wouldn't say I don't deserve to be called a devout Muslim, because I don't

165 believe anyone is perfect, but, I feel like I still have a long way to go. So like for example, prayer and I stopped wearing the hijab

17

166   (headscarf), there are also like, I have friends, people around me who's beliefs and practices may not be in line with our faith, but I just

liberal   *?Islamic / ther expectation.*

167   think each to their own. Whereas I know some people are very like 'no we cannot mix with those who live in a way which is against

liberal   *renewal of hijab.*

168   Islam'. I just think I'm quite chilled, just like, my beliefs isn't for show for everyone its for me and God. Like when I took of my scarf, yeah

defiant.   *Conscious choice*

169   its bad, but like only God can judge me, I know that's cliché, but do you know what I mean?   *no no longer*

guilt   *cliché but do I understand*   *be a 'good'*

170   **R: yeah**   *can she*   *Muslim?*

Imperfect Muslim → guilt   *be understood*

171   P: And I say liberal because I feel like I can be better.

172   **R: Ok. So how does being Muslim contribute to how you see yourself?**   *we're both arab?*

impact of researcher / participant x.

173   P: Its part of who I am. Its hand in hand with other parts of me, like being Arab. Like there is so much of Arabic culture and Islam that

→ *emphasises*

174   just go together, and like compliment each other. It's a major part of who I am, and even down to how I act, what I do. I suppose and even

contradicts

175   what I think I can do and how I vision my life.

wide impact of Islam.

189

176 **R: Can you say a little more about that?**

Jaret — not clear [?]
? Jaret ?

self concept.

177 P: I suppose the fact that I believe in Islam and live my life as a Muslim kind of makes me see myself in a certain way. Like in my

178 marriage for example, while I work, I see my husband as being responsible for financing our family and making the income. And in that

Husband / wife expectations / roles.

179 way, its my responsibility to care for the house. So the way I see my role as a wife is partly influenced by being Muslim. And even more

appreciation of O/T

180 simply as that, because of being Muslim, it keeps me grounded. Its hard to even think about it more than that, like its such a part of me

power of Islam.

181 that its hard to kind of pull out how it contribute specifically.

182 **R: How would you describe your British values?**

183 P: I really appreciate being British, but I feel like it took me marrying someone who isn't British and seeing the way his family lives for

repeats   *British pride.*

184 me to really appreciate being British myself (laughing). You have no idea, when I've been in Egypt, simple things about the British

misunderstand

185 society, like queuing. Just the concept of queuing feels like such a polite British thing compared to how things are in parts of Egypt

Participant B

British freedom

186 (laughing). So I suppose in terms of British values, I would say respect. And freedom, and I really appreciate those things. And when you

187 see a lifestyle which doesn't really seem to have respect and freedom, especially for women, it literally feels like your hands are

gender

188 handcuffed. Do you understand?

Powerful imagery   researcher / participant d.

189 R: mhmm

underamed / prisoner / no choice.   liberal

190 P: like I'm so glad I was born and raised here, like I'm open minded about others and how they choose to live their life and who they are.

191 I'm very proud to be British. *British pride.*

192 R: Where do you think those British values came from?

193 P: From being born and raised in England — *simplistics* -

194 R: Ok, what is it about being born and raised in England? Or do you think just being born here somehow gave you these values?

Appendix I: Table of thematic analysis

A- Layla	B- Sara	C- Mona	D- Halima	E- Khadija
Opportunity for independence • British opp • Independence • British pride	Freedom • Rights • Pride • freedom	Lucky to be british • belonging • lucky • Alien people	Spoilt English girl	Opportunity
Expectations of others • Dif w/ parents • Tenson w/fam • Islamic expectation • Family commitment • Muslim rules • Female reputation	Gender • Object • Expectation of women • Seen and not heard • Men Vs women	Judged • For being muslim • Diff for being brit	Anything is possible	The generation in between • Acting 'British' •
Modern muslim • Liberal • Modern • Disagree with islam	Exclusion • Disrespectful English girl • Don't fit in	Religious • Religious • Me vs strict muslim • Comparison	Two sides • Push/pull • 2 sides	Journey to Islam • Strict Muslim • Religion Vs Culture
Different • misunderstood • being different • Political frustration • socialising	Liberal muslim • Good person • liberal • Different versions of the same thing • Hard to be muslim • lime light • hard	Muslim woman • Men Vs Women	Different • teased • embarrassed • awareness	Constant see saw • Surprising people • Muslim superiorty

sacrifice	Rebellion	Unpredictable chuldhood	Consciously muslim	Children
		• change	• liberal • conscious	• left out
	Dr Jekyll & Mr hyde • sacrifice • guilt	Challenges • clothing • socialising	unislamic	Son Vs Daughter
	Relationship with Islam • Rules • Imperfect Muslim • Expectation	Sacrificing in order to manage	Missed experiences and losses • missed experience • fam obligation • sacrifice	
		Changing world	Men Vs women	
			Swapping places	

Appendix J: Ethical approval City University of London

Psychology Research Ethics Committee

School of Arts and Social Sciences

City University London

London EC1R 0JD

7th October 2015

Dear Mariam Tarik

Reference: PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17

Project title: A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims.

I am writing to confirm that the research proposal detailed above has been granted approval by the City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee.

Period of approval

Approval is valid for a period of three years from the date of this letter. If data collection runs beyond this period you will need to apply for an extension using the Amendments Form.

Project amendments

You will also need to submit an Amendments Form if you want to make any of the following changes to your research:

(a) Recruit a new category of participants

(b) Change, or add to, the research method employed

(c) Collect additional types of data

(d) Change the researchers involved in the project

<u>Adverse events</u>

You will need to submit an Adverse Events Form, copied to the Secretary of the Senate Research Ethics Committee (anna.ramberg.1@city.ac.uk), in the event of any of the following:

> (a) Adverse events
>
> (b) Breaches of confidentiality
>
> (c) Safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults
>
> (d) Incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

Hayley Glasford   Katy Tapper

Departmental Administrator   Chair

Email: ███████████████████ ███████████████████████████ Email:
███████████████████

Appendix K: Ethical approval St Georges University of London

St George's Research Ethics Committee (SGREC)
Ground Floor, Hunter Wing, St George's University of London,
Cranmer Terrace, Tooting, London SW17 0RE

Direct Line: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Email: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇

3rd November 2015

Dear Mariam Tarik

PROJECT TITLE   A qualitiative study into the negiotation of dual identity among British Muslims

REC Reference   n/a
SGREC Reference   SGREC15.0007
Sponsor   City University
Principal   Mariam Tarik
Investigator (PI):

St George's Research Ethics Committee Approval

Review
This study was approved by City University London on 7th October 2015.

Ethical opinion
According to the SGREC process, this study was eligible for approval by the Joint Research and Enterprise Office on behalf of the Committee.

Therefore, a favourable ethical opinion of the above research has been given on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below. This approval is for 5 years from the date of this letter.

The list of documents reviewed and approved by the St George's Research Ethics Committee (SGREC) under requirements of the Research Governance Framework are as follows:

Document	Version	Date
SGREC Form		Signed by Mariam Tarik on 28/10/2015
Poster	V1	PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17
City University London Ethics Approval	PSYETH (P/L) 15/16 17	07/10/2015

Appendix L: Amended ethical approval form for City University of London

Please see addendum on p.217 for changes.

Psychology Department Standard Ethics Application Form:

Undergraduate, Taught Masters and Professional Doctorate Students

This form should be completed in full. Please ensure you include the accompanying documentation listed in question 19.

Does your research involve any of the following? *For each item, please place a 'x' in the appropriate column*	Yes	No
Persons under the age of 18		x
Vulnerable adults (e.g. with psychological difficulties)		x
Use of deception		x
Questions about potentially sensitive topics	x	
Potential for 'labelling' by the researcher or participant (e.g. 'I am stupid')		x
Potential for psychological stress, anxiety, humiliation or pain	x	
Questions about illegal activities		x
Invasive interventions that would not normally be encountered in everyday life (e.g. vigorous exercise, administration of drugs)		x
Potential for adverse impact on employment or social standing		x
The collection of human tissue, blood or other biological samples		x
Access to potentially sensitive data via a third party (e.g. employee data)		x
Access to personal records or confidential information		x
Anything else that means it has more than a minimal risk of physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to participants.		x

If you answered 'no' to all the above questions your application may be eligible for light touch review. You should send your application to your supervisor who will approve it and send it to a

second reviewer. Once the second reviewer has approved your application they will submit it to psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk and you will be issued with an ethics approval code. <u>You cannot start your research until you have received this code.</u>

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions, your application is NOT eligible for light touch review and will need to be reviewed at the next Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee meeting**.** You should send your application to your supervisor who will approve it and send it to psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk. The committee meetings take place on the first Wednesday of every month (with the exception of August). Your application should be submitted at least <u>2 weeks</u> in advance of the meeting you would like it considered at. We aim to send you a response within 7 days. Note that you may be asked to revise and resubmit your application so should ensure you allow for sufficient time when scheduling your research. Once your application has been approved you will be issued with an ethics approval code. <u>You cannot start your research until you have received this code.</u>

Which of the following describes the main applicant? *Please place a 'x' in the appropriate space*	
Undergraduate student	
Taught postgraduate student	
Professional doctorate student	x
Research student	
Staff (applying for own research)	
Staff (applying for research conducted as part of a lab class)	

1. Name of applicant(s).
Mariam Tarik

2. Email(s).
████████████████

3. Project title.
A qualitative study into the negotiation of dual identity among British Muslims.

4. Provide a lay summary of the background and aims of the research. (No more than 400 words.)
Within the UK, we currently have a generation of young adults who are in the unique position of embodying, to a greater or lesser extent, the dual identities of British and Muslim. With the current political and social climate, the Muslim population are often presented in a somewhat demonised way such that the values of being Muslim may be perceived as being opposed to the values of being British. This intra psychic conflict has been seen among other population groups, however an interesting element with this phenomenon is that this is very current. The aim of this research is to attempt to illuminate the internal processes of this group of individuals, to attempt to understand and explain how they negotiate their dual identities. This will contribute to the feel of Counselling Psychology in a multitude of ways; the discipline is primarily concerned with the intra-psychic distress and conflict which may be experienced by individuals in society and by illuminating the processes involved for those directly affected by the international events, we as Counselling Psychologist have a key opportunity to shed light on the costs of our national and international politics on an individual level. Further to this, as a research, and indeed an academic, I am able to recognise that this demonization is not a unique phenomenon, and in fact in various parts of society we has seen similar negative political rhetoric on various subgroups of society-these include (but are not limited to) the Afro-Caribbean and homosexual population in the United States and Europe. Whilst not suggesting causality, with these specific population we have seen an interesting trend with respects to mental health, whereby research has indicated that experiencing social discrimination, as increasingly seen affecting the Muslim population today, can have an impact on psychological distress, with some reach suggesting that the mental health of the 'excluded' population was directly affected by the experience of socially related oppression and rejection (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne & Marin, 2001). If we look at the patterns between these populations, within Counselling Psychology and other mental health services we may well see a marked increase in our contact with British Muslims who are currently moulding their identity under the gaze of current political events and rhetoric. From the outcome of this

research, and with further research, we may be able to begin to form infrastructure necessary to work address mental health in both a preventative and reactive way.

5. Provide a summary of the design and methodology.

Purposive sampling will be employed to recruit over 18 year old university students living in London who identify as British Muslims to take part in a one to one semi structured interview about their experiences of negotiating their dual nationality in London 2015. Participants will be directly recruited using posters, which will be advertised on public student notice boards and within the Student Union at City University, London on public student notice boards and the University Student Union. Those who express an interest in taking part in the study will be contacted via City university email. At this point they will be offered a participant information sheet and given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. If they are happy to continue, an appropriate time will be arranged which is convenient for both participant and researcher, where a room will be booked at City University. All interviews will be audio recorded on an encrypted digital recorder and analysed using Critical Narrative Analysis.

Please see addendum, page 29.

6. Provide details of all the methods of data collection you will employ (e.g., questionnaires, reaction times, skin conductance, audio-recorded interviews).

This proposal is suggesting 60minute semi structured audio-recorded interviews with the collection of some basic demographic data. All raw data will be transcribed and analysed using Critical Narrative Analysis. All data will be anonymised for the purposed of participant confidentiality.

7. Is there any possibility of a participant disclosing any issues of concern during the course of the research? (e.g. emotional, psychological, health or educational.) Is there any possibility of the researcher identifying such issues? If so, please describe the procedures that are in place for the appropriate referral of the participant.

The issues with which the study is concerned may be sensitive for some, and such issues around distress may be disclosed. As a trainee Counselling Psychologist, I believe that I have the necessary and relevant skills to be able to identify and contain such issues. If concerning issues arise, I feel confident that I will have the skills to be able to risk assess in order to identify the most appropriate course of action or onward referral. Additionally to this, I have considered issues around the possibility of a participant disclosing illegal activity or behaviour. If this were to occur within the context of the research interviews to consider the context within which this is disclosed-depending on the seriousness of the illegal behaviour, if this is historic it may not need to be disclosed; however the disclosure of the intention to engage in illegal behaviour will need to be taken seriously and passed on, as necessary.

8. Location of data collection. (If any part of your research takes place outside England/Wales please also describe how you have identified and complied with all local requirements concerning ethical approval and research governance.)

All data collection is proposed to take place within London, England.

9. Details of participants (e.g. age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria). Please justify any exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria for this study is university students ages over 18 years, living in London and who identify themselves as being both British born and Muslims. Exclusion criteria for the study will be those who do not speak English, as with this form of analysis, a requirement is that participants are able to articulate their story.

10. How will participants be selected and recruited? Who will select and recruit participants?

Purposive sampling, where participants are recruited based on their relevance to the study, will be used in order to recruit participants, who will be self-selecting in terms of actively contacting me to express interest in taking part in the study.

11. Provide details of any incentives participants will receive for taking part.

There will be no incentives offered as part of this study, although light refreshments will be provided.

12. Will informed consent be obtained from all participants? If not, please provide a justification. (Note that a copy of your consent form should be included with your application, see question 19.)

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to interview.

13. How will you brief and debrief participants? (Note that copies of your information sheet and debrief should be included with your application, see question 19.)

Briefing will occur prior to participants signing the consent form, and all participants will be given a debrief sheet and offered the opportunity to have a debrief meeting if they wish. If participants decide to opt for a debrief interview this will occur immediately after the interview where the interviewee and researcher can have the opportunity to discuss the content of the interview and the impact this has had on the participant. This may allow the participant to feel supported if the interview has brought up any unexpected feelings. In line with BPS Code of Human Research as well as the Code of Ethics, it is important to attempt to counteract any negative feeling which a research study may induce in a participant, therefore, the debriefing interview is an important opportunity to contain the client and manage any unexpected negative effects. Further to this, the debrief is also an opportunity to re-visit the purpose of the study and what is hoped to be gained from the research, so that the participant is able to have a clear understanding of the research and their part within it.

14. What potential risks to the participants do you foresee, and how do you propose to deal with these risks? These should include both ethical and health and safety risks.

I recognise that the study topic may be sensitive for some participants, particular at this moment in time, following recent international tragic events. From an ethical perspective, I understand how it may be difficult or distressing to discuss experiences of identity negotiation or conflict. If these issues do arise I plan to address these in the room as a Trainee Counselling Psychologist. Care will be taken over confidentiality, such that all participants will be given an alphanumeric code and all audio recordings and data produced from the study will be securely stored. All audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as they are longer needed for analysis. I do not foresee any health and safety risks associated with this research.

15. What potential risks to the researchers do you foresee, and how do you

propose to deal with these risks? These should include both ethical and health and safety risks.

I, myself, identify as British Muslim, therefore, during the interview process I may be exposed to the retelling of experiences I find distressing or perhaps that are personally relevant to me. To deal with this risk I will ensure that I am in on-going personal therapy for the duration of the research process.

Regarding researcher safety, I am proposing that interviews be held at City University, this is a secure location and is emotionally neutral. As interview room would need to be booked, security/university personnel will be aware that I am in the room and I will never be alone in the building with a participant. I will ensure that I inform someone that I am due to interview a participant and what time I expect to be finished. At the end of each interview I will telephone call my contact; I will have an arrangement with them that if they do not receive my call at the expected time, this will trigger further events.

16. What methods will you use to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity? (Please note that consent forms should always be kept in a separate folder to data and should NOT include participant numbers.)

Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces

Complete anonymity of participants (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are a part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification.)	
Anonymised sample or data (i.e. an *irreversible* process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates.)	**x**
De-identified samples or data (i.e. a *reversible* process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location.)	
Participants being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research	
Any other method of protecting the privacy of participants (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only.) ***Please provide further details below.***	

17. Which of the following methods of data storage will you employ?	
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Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces	
Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet	x
Data and identifiers will be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	x
Access to computer files will be available by password only	x
Hard data storage at City University London	x
Hard data storage at another site. *Please provide further details below.*	

18. Who will have access to the data?	
Please place an 'X' in the appropriate space	
Only researchers named in this application form	x
People other than those named in this application form. *Please provide further details below of who will have access and for what purpose.*	

19. Attachments checklist. *Please ensure you have referred to the Psychology Department templates when producing these items. These can be found in the Research Ethics page on Moodle.

Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces

	Attached	Not applicable
*Text for study advertisement	x	
*Participant information sheet	x	
*Participant consent form	x	
Questionnaires to be employed		x

Debrief	x	
Others (please specify, e.g. topic guide for interview, confirmation letter from external organisation)		
Preliminary interview questions	x	

20. Information for insurance purposes.

(a) Please provide a brief abstract describing the project

Within the UK we have a growing Muslim population, whilst simultaneously we have an on-going political 'war on terror' which is highly focused on individuals of Muslim background. Following post war mass migration to the UK, we currently have a generation of young adults who are at key developmental stages in their life, whilst experiencing a presentation within the media of 'Muslim' being in some way opposed to being 'British'. With this level of external messaging and pressure, this study is interested in the way in which British Muslims living in 2015 London negotiate the duality of their identity. I propose to recruit university students who self identify as being British Muslims and inviting them to a 60 minute on to one semi structured interview, which will be subsequently transcribed and analysed using Critical Narrative Analysis.

Please see addendum, page 29.

(b) Does the research involve any of the following:	Yes	No
Children under the age of 5 years?		x
Pregnant women?		X
Clinical trials / intervention testing?		x
Over 5,000 participants?		x
(c) Is any part of the research taking place outside of the UK?		x

If you have answered 'no' to all the above questions, please go to section 21.

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions you will need to check that the university's insurance will cover your research. You should do this by submitting this application to anna.ramberg.1@city.ac.uk, before applying for ethics approval. Please initial below to confirm that you have done this.

I have received confirmation that this research will be covered by the university's insurance.

Name ……………………………………….. Date……………………………

21. Information for reporting purposes.		
		Please place an 'X' in all appropriate spaces
(a) Does the research involve any of the following:	**Yes**	**No**
Persons under the age of 18 years?		x
Vulnerable adults?		**X**
Participant recruitment outside England and Wales?		x
(b) Has the research received external funding?		x

22. Declarations by applicant(s)	
Please confirm each of the statements below by placing an 'X' in the appropriate space	
I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with accompanying information, is complete and correct.	x
I accept the responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application.	x
I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.	x
I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data can commence until ethical approval has been given.	x

	Signature (Please type name)	**Date**
Student(s)	**Mariam Tarik**	**23/06/15**
Supervisor		

Reviewer Feedback Form

Name of reviewer(s).
Julianna Challenor

Email(s).
Julianna.challenor@city.ac.uk

Does this application require any revisions or further information?

Please place an 'X' the appropriate space

No		**Yes**	
Reviewer(s) should sign the application and return to psychology.ethics@city.ac.uk, ccing to the supervisor.	X	Reviewer(s) should provide further details below and email directly to the student and supervisor.	

Revisions / further information required

To be completed by the reviewer(s). PLEASE DO NOT DELETE ANY PREVIOUS COMMENTS.

23/3/2015. Note from K.Tapper. Two committee members felt this application was eligible for light touch review.

Date:

Comments:

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Applicant response to reviewer comments

To be completed by the applicant. Please address the points raised above and explain how you have done this in the space below. You should then email the entire application (including attachments), with tracked changes directly back to the reviewer(s), ccing to your supervisor.

Date:

Response:

Reviewer signature(s)

To be completed upon FINAL approval of all materials.

	Signature (Please type name)	**Date**
Supervisor	**Aylish O'Driscoll**	**7.5.15**
Second reviewer	**Julianna Challenor**	**7.5.15**

<u>Addendum</u>

After further reflection, I am now proposing to further expand my recruitment sample to include recruiting from Islamic centres and mosques within London and a further two London Universities-Brunel University and St Georges University. Further to this I intend to utilise my own extended network and ask individuals who may know people who would wish to be involved in the research to contact me (snowball sampling), as well as contacting other community based organisations which may be accessed by British Muslims who otherwise fit my inclusion criteria.

The purpose of this is to try and reach a wider sample population who identify themselves as both British and Muslim, whilst also trying to capture a wide age range of participants as well as those who are not university students. In order to recruit from these sites, I will contact management services directly, explaining my research and offering to meet in order to explain the purpose of the research project. I intend to display posters within these additional recruitment sites in order to attract potential participants, as well as requesting if the poster may be included in any online or written publications. My research poster will be amended for each site, to reflect that the interview location will be at each particular location in order to prevent any unnecessary travel for my participants. All interview posters have been included here in appendix B. In order to contact people via snowball sampling through my own network, I will email my poster with my contact details and ask people to forward this to anyone who may be interested in taking part.

Part Two: Publishable Article

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Understanding the role of religion in Counselling Psychology.

<u>Prefix</u>

This article has been written as a short report for submission to the Journal of Counselling Psychology. One of the reasons I chose to write for this journal was due to the sociological perspective of my research. Due to the emphasis on societal contextualisation, my research could easily be dismissed as being too sociological to be relevant to the discipline of Counselling Psychology. I would challenge this, as it strikes me that in order to benefit the client groups we serve, our discipline needs to engage with these issues in a more meaningful way.

The following article is presented in the format required for manuscripts for this journal. For reference, the submission criteria can be found in appendices of this section of the portfolio.

Abstract

This paper presents a brief synopsis of the findings from a doctoral thesis exploring the narratives of dual identity amongst five British Muslim women. A cross party think tank recently published UK figures that suggest Muslims are more likely to be unemployed than any other group (Demons, 2015), with UK Government reports describing Muslim populations as self-segregating and adopting of practices that are inherently in conflict with British values (Hussain & Bagguley, 2005; Modood, 2006; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). Due to the widespread increase in 'Islamic' terrorism, as well as a rise in Islam related social exclusion and discrimination, it is vitally important that Counselling Psychologists are able to have a sophisticated understanding of these social challenges, how they directly impact the client base we serve and our role in affecting change.

Semi-structured narrative interviews were carried out with five British Muslim women and the resulting data was analysed using Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA). The analysis resulted in two overarching constructions; the construction of the Muslim woman and the construction of the British Muslim, underpinned by a narrative of gender inequality. The analysis of the data suggested that religious ideology directly impacted self-conceptualisation in daily functioning and interpersonal relationships. It is argued in this paper that if Counselling Psychologists, as well as other therapeutic practitioners, are to engage with our clients in the attempt to understand their world, we must also engage with issues of religion as a lens through which our clients experience and understand their world.

Keywords: British, Muslim, Critical Narrative Analysis, identity

Introduction

A primary aim for this article is to challenge the way in which we, as Counselling Psychologists, engage with religion and the religious practices of our clients. With the recent socio-political concerns around 'Islamic fundamentalism', there has been increasing question as to the societal value or even risk of religion. Richard Dawkins (2006) book, titled 'The God Delusion' presents the belief in a God as irrational, a position that many psychologists may share, seeing this belief as a groundless defence that forms part of the clients pathology, or is irrelevant to therapeutic practice (Coyle, 2010). This fundamentally contradicts the underpinning philosophical structure of Counselling Psychology. The founding principles of the discipline rest upon egalitarianism and a holistic approach, and require us to examine and engage with the clients meaning making systems, such as religion, in the same way as we may consider the impact of their sexuality on their presentation (Coyle, 2010). Current Counselling Psychology training may address issues of cross-cultural therapeutic practice, whilst often neglecting issues of spirituality and religion (Coyle, 2010). This research gives the practicing Counselling Psychologist, as well as other health professionals, an insight into the way in which religious ideology, in this case the Islamic faith, can contribute to ones experiences of their own identity and the way in which they relate with others.

The British Muslim

Over recent years, we have observed a shift in the way in which Muslims are perceived in Britain, with the British Muslim experience being largely discriminatory (Hopkins, 2011). Questions have been raised as to whether British values are in opposition to the Islamic faith and practice (Abbas, 2007; Kundnani, 2007), with some doubting if Muslims are willing, or are able, to integrate into what may be considered conventional British society (Abbas, 2005; 2007). Opinion polls have reflected this, with respondents feeling that Islamic and British values were incompatible, and that Islam was to blame for the July 7th 2005 bombings in London (ICM, 2008).

Following the September 11th attacks on the United States in 2001, a political 'war on terror' was activated in the UK as well as other nations around the world, the implementation of which has

resulted in a near exclusive focus on young Muslims (Kundnani, 2007). In the UK, there have been a number of 'home grown' terrorist attacks including that of the 7th July 2005 bombings, in which four British Muslims were identified as the suicide bombers responsible. Following this was the 2013 fatal attack on a soldier, Lee Rigby, in a suburb of South London, for which two British converts to Islam were convicted. Based on this rise of 'home grown terrorists', the UK government has commissioned various anti-terrorism programmes, all of which disproportionately effect Muslim men (Hussain, 2013). These very government initiatives have been accused of themselves "…construct[ing] Muslims as potential extremists/enemies unless proven differently…" (McGhee, 2008, p. 49). Therefore, it is at least in part from these anti-terror programmes, and associated laws, that the heightened sense of emergency and threat has been driven into everyday life (Hussain, 2013). There are those that question the Muslim populations' loyalty to the British establishment, perceived to be evidenced in the opposition to UK military action in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan by many British Muslims (Abbas, 2005). This has led others to question to what extent such Muslims affiliate themselves with being British, or rather set themselves apart as a detached community, and consequently become a potential threat to national security (Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007). This extends beyond the British horizon; in the United States within the first few weeks of his presidential term, newly elected President Donald Trump signed an executive order temporarily banning individuals from seven majority Muslim countries in an attempt to 'protect' America from 'terrorism' (BBC, 2017). In essence, for many, the Muslim community has become a homogenous, collective terrorist suspect to be feared.

To date, exploration of this area has predominately been focused within the fields of sociology and social psychology, with a notable gap in the knowledgebase from a Counselling Psychology perspective. Available research across disciplines suggests that the British Muslim population may have difficulties marrying what may be conflicting British and Muslim identities (Balsano & Sirin, 2007). Perhaps due to the secularisation and polarised animosities perceived between the West and Islam, there has been a growth of a more 'purist' Islam amongst second and third generation Muslims of migrant parents (Roy, 2004; Kibria, 2008). This results in a strengthening of the Islamic identity,

allowing a transcending of divisions of race, class or ethnicity (Kashyap & Lewis, 2012; Abbas, 2005; Modood, 2006; Brown, 2006).

<u>The role of the media</u>

The Muslim community in Britain has been the focus of frequent media and academic attention for many years, ranging from the controversy of Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' in the 1980s, to more recent concerns over 'home grown terrorism'. Cumulatively, this has led to the implied alienation of the Muslim community from British society and values (Vertovec, 2002; Alexander, 2004; Mirza, Senthilkumaran & Ja'far, 2007; Bleich, 2009). The extensive media portrayal of Muslims in the UK largely presents this community in a negative light (Greenberg & Miazhevich, 2012; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Moore, Mason & Lewis, 2008; Ameli, 2004) even when compared other monotheist religion followers (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar & Abdelhamid, 2015). A review into the British media reporting of Islam and Muslims concluded that the overwhelmingly negative reporting was likely to not only proliferate feelings of insecurity and alienation among British Muslims, but also increase feelings of suspicion among their non-Muslim counterparts (Richardson, 2007). This is likely to be related to the documented rise in anti-Muslim related hate crime, so called Islamaphobia, as well as Islam related social exclusion and isolation (Afshar, Aitkens & Franks, 2006; Moghissi, 2006). While some reported anti-Muslim hate crime often occurs in the aftermath of national or international terrorist events, research has demonstrated that Muslims are often subjected to hostility and decimation, which cannot be correlated to specific terrorist events (Lambert & Githens-Mazer, 2010). Further to this, media attention often presents a greater focus on the 'practicing' Muslim (Spalek, 2008) with a notable desire to identify Muslims into concise and clear groupings of those who are 'good', 'moderate' or 'extreme' (Mahmood, 2004). The danger of this is that the concept of 'dangerous Muslim' can be internalised into the self-representation of the Muslim community at large (Sartawi & Sammut, 2012). There can also be consequences of Islamaphobic related social exclusion, including on a social, psychological and physical level. Research indicates that those who experience social rejection demonstrate brain activation in the same structures that are activated during the experience of physical pain, as well as reported feelings of lower self-esteem and self-worth

(Eisenberger, Lieberman & Williams, 2003; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2004; Gunnar, Sebanc, Tout, Donzella & Van Dulmen, 2003). This is particularly pertinent, if we are to consider this in relation to psychological theories of belonging. It is hypothesised that individuals have a strong, fundamental human motivation to form close, meaningful interpersonal relationships with others, and a lack of such belonging could results in a variety of ill effects (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In this way we can see that by experiencing social rejection, or a lack of belonging, there is a potential negative impact on psychological and physical health and wellbeing. As a Counselling Psychologist, it is important to consider the multitude of issues for this population in relation to the philosophy of the discipline, with its roots in humanistic and existential therapies. At the very core of Counselling Psychology is the belief that, through the therapeutic relationship, we are working towards an authentic meeting of our client for the purpose of enhancing the subjective resolve of the individual for the fulfillment of their potential (Strawberry & Woolfe, 2003). This involves a holistic approach, taking into consideration a developmental view of the client, their life and lifestyle (Strawberry & Woolfe, 2003). In this way, in 'meeting' a British Muslim client experiencing psychological distress, it would be particularly important for the Counselling Psychologist to be able to take a holistic view, and not neglect the socio-political rhetoric surrounding the client and the potential impact of this in the presentation.

Research Aims

The purpose of the research, presented here, was to explore and understand how the two worlds of 'Britishness' and 'Muslim' interact within a female population. The study aimed to investigate how women of Islamic faith who have been born and raised in London contain and negotiate, on an intra-psychic level, the dual identities of being both Muslim and British within the current political rhetoric and climate. More specifically, the research is interested in the way in which British Muslim women describe and understand these identities and how they interact. The study aims to contextualise this within cultural and socio-political climates.

Method

<u>Participants</u>

Five British Muslim women participated in this study, aged 21-45 years recruited via purposive and snowball sampling. Participants were from various ethnic backgrounds including Arabic, African and Asian, although all were born within the UK and lived in London. All participants had siblings and one participant had children of her own. Participant information, including age, highest educational achievement and employment status is listed in fig 1. All participants have been assigned a pseudonym to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

Pseudonym	Age	Highest educational achievement	Employment status
Layla	21	Undergraduate degree	Full time student
Sara	29	Master degree	Full time employed
Mona	36	Undergraduate degree	Full time employed
Halima	31	College	Full time employed
Khadija	45	GCSE equivalent	Home maker

Fig. 1. Table of participant demographics

<u>The researcher</u>

The researcher is a trainee Counselling Psychologist at City University of London in her early thirties. She was born and raised in London, and is a Muslim of Arabic parentage. The challenge was to openly acknowledge personal assumptions and experiences, in order to prevent projection of the researcher's own experiences on to the data.

<u>Instruments</u>

Prior to the research commencing, ethical approval was obtained from both City University of London and St Georges University of London as recruitment sites. All participants were given information sheets before partaking in the research, and therefore gave consent for their participation.

The primary instrument in this research was a one-to-one semi structured narrative interview, carried out by the principle investigator, which lasted between 37 and 75 minutes. The interview design was inspired by the work of a number of researchers and resulted in a loose interview style (McAdams, 1993; Reissman, 1993; Crossley, 2000) focusing on a few particular aspects of the individual's life.

Analysis

Data was analysed using Langdridge's (2007) Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA), as this methodology allows for the foregrounding of the way in which individuals formulate their 'selves' within continuous social interactions (Forgas, 2002). This methodology lends itself well to research with a politicised focus, such as the current study, as the analytic strategy instructs the researcher to engage with relevant political discourses and critical social theory. Similarly, CNA lends itself to contextualising narratives within social and cultural contexts as it sees narratives as a threading together of both the personal (micro) and the social (macro). This dovetails well with the aims of the research, to embed the research within the social context, but also with Counselling Psychology's commitment to engage with an individuals subjectivity by viewing a phenomenon within context (Division of Counselling Psychology, 2006). Langdridge proposes six stages to CNA, as demonstrated in fig 2.
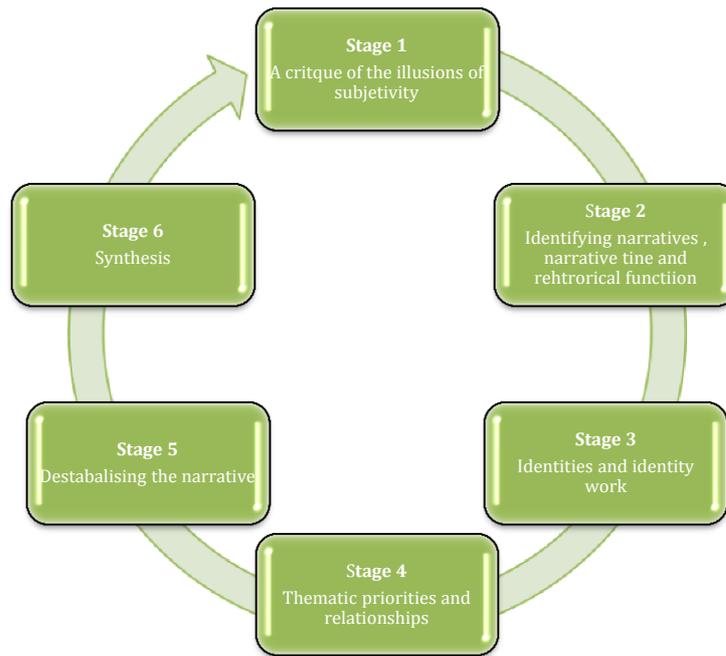
Fig 2. Model of CNA (Langdridge, 2007)

Findings and Discussion

Based on the analysis, themes and subthemes were formulated into two broad overarching constructions; the construction of the Muslim woman and the construction of the British Muslim, which was underpinned by a narrative of gender inequality. As a gendered narrative was particularly salient across all participants, who range in age, education history, marital status, as well as other variables, this can be taken as an indication of its importance across this group. Therefore, it is proposed that these constructions do not exist in isolation, but rather there is an overlap with gender-based inequality as a feature of constructions of both the Muslim woman and the British Muslim, see fig 3.
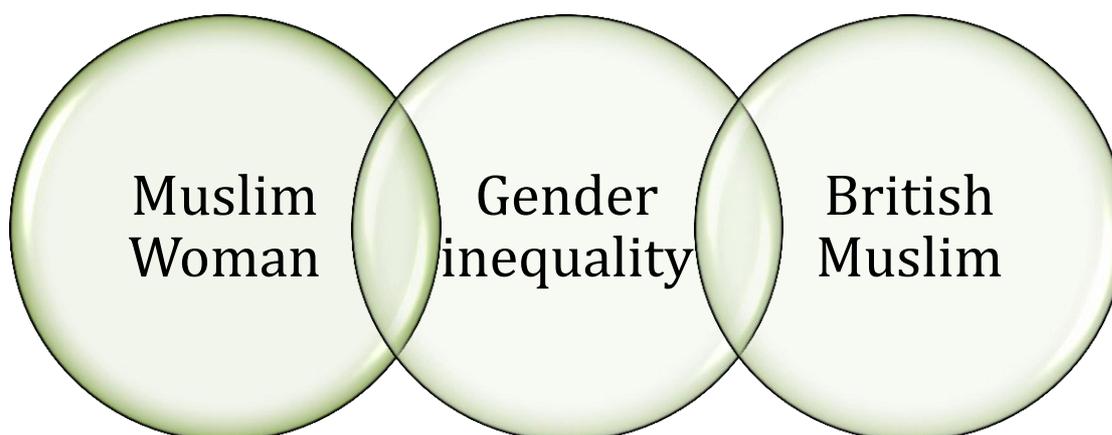
Fig. 3. Outcomes of analysis

<u>Gender inequality</u>

 "...my mum was always saying... bear in mind that women and men are different..." (Mona; 32:352)

Within the first interview conducted, Layla spoke of the female reputation "…so in the Muslim community, there is this whole big thing about reputation and being a girl…" (line 250). Layla explains her concerns when befriending males, out of fear that they would be seen together and this would have negative social implications for the family. Further Layla also describes her brother as 'religious' explaining that "…my brother is very very, like, we don't talk to women… he tries to avoid any sort of, any sort of possibility for him to not have to integrate with women…"(line 329). From this, we can see that for Layla to be 'religious', and compliant with Islamic teaching, also means maintaining a distance between males and females. If one were not behave in a way which did not conform with this, by having male friends and being seen by members of the community, it would have implications not only for the evaluation of ones 'religiousness' but also for the family as a whole, due to the 'spoiling' of the female reputation.

Narrators often described the way in which their assigned gender inherently resulted in expectations of behaviour and seemed to put them in direct subservient relationships with male counterparts. My

participants' spoke of a gender based inequality between females and males, be it siblings, cousins or partners. They recalled the ways in which parents and family members accepted, and even expected, behaviours from males that would be deemed inappropriate for females, "… they're seen as jack the lads and it's part of being a boy…as if things are beyond their control, you know, like as girls we chose to do things good or bad…" (Halima, line 295). Here, Halima was specifically referring to the male members of her family being excused for engaging in pre-marital relationships, something that would be forbidden for the females. There were also further domestic expectations for the female family members that males seemed to be exempt from. This feminine-masculine divide is often seen in traditionally Islamic cultures, with a number of traditional Islamic and Arabic proverbs glorifying masculinity, with men often considered 'guardians' of their female relatives (Faqir, 2001). Femininity is often constructed as 'good' and 'sweet', while also favouring conforming to 'appropriate' gender roles (Faqir, 2001). It is, in part, these socially constructed gender roles that act as a means of facilitating this form of gender inequality. Gender inequality can take many forms, from difference in access to health care provisions, education opportunities as well as pay for similar or comparable jobs (Lorber, 2010). While it would be easy to consider the gender inequalities described by the participants as being an example of male patriarchy within the Islamic faith and Islamic communities, this would too simplistic and reductionist of these issues, as gender based inequality and discrimination exists beyond Islamic contexts. We have seen an example of this recently within the academic sector in the United Kingdom, resulting in a major strike of University lecturers over gender based pay inequality (Weale, 2016).

The construction of the Muslim woman

"…but yeah I present myself as a Muslim woman and that can lead to assumptions…." (Halima: 10; 94)

The narrators own negotiation with what it means to be a Muslim woman within a religious and social sphere was both prominent and vivid throughout all interviews. This negotiation was multifaceted with a tone of defiance and rebellion, contrasted with that of abject acceptance. The participants

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related in different ways to the concept of the Muslim woman, and this may be in part due to some participants engaging publicly with their religious identity through the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, known as the hijab. For some participants, there was no denying their Muslim woman identity, worn externally through the hijab. Whereas, for other women, this was a more internal construct.

One of the participants occupied a unique position in the sustaining of socially defined expectation of Muslim females. Khadija was the oldest participant, at least nine years older than the rest of the research cohort, and was the only participant to have children of her own. While the other participants described the ways in which cultural gender based norms and expectations were placed upon them by the family or the wider community, Khadija spoke of her role in this in relation to her children. Thus, in many ways Khadija played a key part in perpetuating these gendered norms. Khadija reflected on the importance of chastity, virginity and the avoidance of pre-martial sexual intercourse for females, as it was felt that virginity could be 'proven' in females by the bleeding of the hymen on the first sexual encounter of the wedding night. This is in line with previous research, in which premarital virginity was seen as an obligation for females despite Islamic doctrine indicating that this was important for both men and women (Musso, Cherabi & Fanget, 2002). For Khadija, it seemed logical, based on these assertions that her daughter would be the one the family chose to 'protect' "… it's a girls reputation that not only reflects on her but also the parents family… so who do we protect more? Obviously the girl…" (Khadija, line 187). There is no medical definition of virginity (Amer, Howarth & Sen, 2015), however, Khadija seems to be referring to what may be understood as the socially constructed meaning of virginity - something which can be 'kept', 'lost' and therefore 'protected' (Amer, Howarth & Sen, 2015).

Chodorow (1999) argues that it is families that create gendered children, and if this family is organised in terms of the mothers 'mothering' and the fathers' dominance, this creates different relational needs in male and female children. Chodorow (1978), suggests that for female children, identity development is an inhibited process due to the inability to overcome the early identification with the mother, resulting in the female child never fully developing into an adult woman with a full sense of

herself (cited in Craib, 1998). For Chodorow (1978) "A girl does not simply identify with her mother… Rather mother and daughter maintain elements of their primary relationships which means that they feel alike in fundamental ways…" (pg 110). This relationship is maintained in this way for a number of reasons, and not just due to a shared sex. Rather, the mother finds herself depended upon by the 'needy' infant child, who in turn, reflects back to the needy infant part of herself that she has had to repress as part of her own development into adulthood (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983). Through these early interactions with the baby, the baby is able to develop a sense of omnipotence and security, as the mother is in a state of 'primary maternal preoccupation' (Winnicott, 1971; Gomez, 1997). Over time, the role of the mother becomes to meet the needs of the child whilst simultaneously teaching the child how to repress these needs (Craib, 1998). Winnicott's (1963) proposal of early development is inherently social, and from this perspective, we can see the importance of the context of the mothering the development of the female identity. Based on these early childhood experiences with the mother, the female child learns to split off and repress the dependent part of herself and to neglect her own needs in favour of meeting the needs of others; particularly those needs of adult men and children (Craib, 1998).

The women in this study all described a gendered inequality and subservience to male counterparts, based on an expression of female sexuality. There was an element of danger associated with ones sexuality for these women; for Layla female sexuality was policed through the concept of 'reputation', for Sara her exposed shoulders evoked a public reaction and was seen as a 'scandalous', and for Khadija her daughters virginity needed to be 'protected' by the family. So rather than being an innate, normal element of humanity, sexuality becomes conceptualised to have the power to destroy the family or oneself, in the case of honour related violence. Therefore, the mother now must unconsciously teach the female child to repress her needs in favour of the need of others, but also she must repress her tempting and seductive sexuality. If this is successfully integrated into the self-concept, female children may grow into adult women fearing their own sexuality and sexual functioning, in relation to men who's sexual desires and functioning are "beyond their control". The experience of female sexuality in this way may result in feelings of shame and guilt around the

presence of these urges. Equally, if the Muslim female were to go against these conceptualisations of female sexuality and engage in pre-marital sexual relations, this would inherently mean a disobedience to God, which in turn could result in psychological distress. Sara describes similar feelings of guilt coupled with intrusive thoughts when she would engage in the 'forbidden' acts of being in nightclubs.

Similarly, Chodorow (1999) suggests that women often seek to fulfil the need for love, originally met within early childhood by the mother, through close relationships with other women. I have discussed Laylas narrative around female reputation in terms of the role of rumour and previous research suggests that rumour spreading is often carried out by other women (Faquir, 2001). Equally, Mona described her relationships with other Muslim women as a matter of comparison, and perhaps even competition. In these contexts, the relationship with other women cannot be considered safe, as in these cases women can be both judgmental, persecutory and rejecting, as well as have the power 'taint' ones reputation and social standing within the community. This further isolates the Muslim woman; men are to be distanced from in order to protect ones reputation, whilst women are waiting to both police and punish ones religiosity.

The construction of the British Muslim

"...being a Muslim is hard in Britain because we're labelled for the wrong reason and labelled in a negative way" (Sara; 9; 123)

All participants within this study narrated on feeling misunderstood, left out and different to many of the people around them. The relationship with others was complex, with conflicting feelings both towards Islamic teaching and other Muslims, as well as towards non-Muslim peers. Layla, Sara and Halima all identified specific examples of when they had felt they had been discriminated against due to their Muslim identity. The experience of anti-Muslim discrimination is, unfortunately, a common report within the academic sphere (Afshar, Aitkens & Franks, 2006; Moghissi, 2006). However, whilst the expression of feeling different to peers and ones non-Muslim network was discussed extensively by participants, there was also a sense of dissimilarity with other Muslims. For some the moral judgment from other Muslims was particularly difficult to manage, noted by Halima who describes the

way in which she is branded a 'spoilt English girl', while Khadija refers to a 'Muslim superiority' that she believes exists within the Muslim community. The manner in which the narrators experience and interact with those around them is significant, as in knowing something of our prescribed group we are able to know something of ourselves (Lawler, 2014). In this way, individuals are aware that they fit into classified groups, such as 'Muslim' or 'British' and their behaviours may be based, in some part, on what they know of these groups (Lawler, 2014). Hacking (1999) suggests that ones identity is informed by the lens that society constructs of that identity. So, for these participants, if the social construct of 'Muslim' informed by their peers seemed to be incompatible with their expressed behaviours in that moment, this resulted in a conflict. Consequently, this conflict led to a sense of inadequacy and guilt, implied by intrusive thoughts of "I shouldn't be here" or religious flaws being exposed by 'better' Muslims. Individuals attempt to reconcile such internal conflicts, proposed here to be achieved through the concept of the 'liberal' or modern' Muslim. For the interviewees, when they spoke of their liberal religious standpoint, they seemed to be referring to an embodiment of Islam. This included disagreeing with traditional, perhaps more fundamentalist Islamic philosophy and teaching. For some, this was captured by the adoption of non-traditional western dress, and choosing to not wear the hijab, whereas for others this was captured by the conscious way in which they practiced their Islamic faith-focusing on the choice to be Muslim, rather than an adoption of the faith based on parental tradition. These ways of conceptualising one's liberalism are vague and abstract, as well as vastly subjective for each individual. By referring to oneself as a 'liberal' or 'Modern' Muslim, one is able to bypass socially constructed notions of the Islamic extremist, whilst suggesting an evolved Islamic expression. For this sample, a liberal or modern Muslim identity allowed for the identity flux between Muslim and British identities, by engaging with elements of both.

Implications for Counselling Psychology and clinical practice

At a fundamental level, an important outcome of this research is that it allowed the opportunity to illuminate the complexities of identity negotiation for the women interviewed. The findings of this study have implications for Counselling Psychology; these are be explored in terms of applicability for clinical practice and service development, as well as implications beyond the clinical room

<u>Clinical practice</u>

The findings from this study suggest that, for these participants, there was evidence of psychological distress associated in the negotiations of the dual national and religious identities, evidenced in feelings of anger, guilt and intrusive thoughts. This distress was linked with the social construction of the Muslim woman and the British Muslim; therefore the practitioner Counselling Psychologists working with this community must assess issues of gender construction and religious ideology in therapeutic formulation. The gendered narrative that permeated throughout all interviews indicated the prominence of gender related power inequality and socially constructed norms for this group, and it would be imperative to consider these issues when formulating mental health difficulties in the female population (Moradi & Yoder, 2012).

Similarly, with this research it was hoped to challenge some of the popular discourses around the conceptualisation of Muslim women. It is important as individuals in the helping profession that we are able to step away from discriminatory popular discourses and think about this group from a broader perspective, and it is believed this research offers this opportunity. As Counselling Psychologists it may be an oxymoron to say we must consider issues of diversity and multiculturalism; we may even see this as part of our brand slogan, differentiating us from other psychologist professions. This is evidenced through the presence of cultural and diversity issues within this publication. However, the points raised in this article are not issues of multiculturalism. All the participants in this research are British. Born in London. It seems important to emphasis this, as it is all too easy to sweep this population into issues of multiculturalism, to consider people as British Pakistani, or British Arab. Based on this research, it is suggested that the practicing clinician must go beyond this, to acknowledge the clients meaning making system, in this case their religious framework, as a lens through which they experience their world. By engaging with this within clinical practice, integrating this into assessment and formulation, we may be able to access a wealth of information, which may be clinically relevant to their presentation and subsequent treatment and management.

Service development

The experience of social separateness, which may be present for British Muslims following recent national and international events, is not a unique phenomenon, and we have witnessed this process among other populations in society, such as the Afro-Caribbean and homosexual populations. Research into these groups has demonstrated that, social marginalisation can affect psychological distress, and in fact mental health can be directly impacted by socially related exclusion (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne & Marin, 2001). The unique position that we may find ourselves in now is that the political and social issues around 'Islam' are very current, such that the long term consequences may well be seen within mental health services in years to come. A report in 2007 suggests that Islam related discrimination contributes to health disparities and difficulties in accessing appropriate mental health services (Laird, Amer, Barnett & Barnes, 2007). Counselling Psychology is a growing profession, and as a result of this we will have opportunities to impact service design and provision. Laird, Amer, Barnett & Barnes (2007) suggest a move to 'anti-religionism' within health care provision in the UK, identifying the importance of the development of health services that meet the needs of the Muslim population, particularly within the current anti- Muslim discourse in order to improve health outcome. This is an area that a Counselling Psychologist would have the key skills from our training to be able to have a direct impact in service development and evaluation for this group.

Beyond clinical practice

Just as this article has attempted to go beyond issues of diversity, equality and multiculturalism, it is suggested that we must follow suit and dare to dip our toe into broader issues of discrimination, equity and social justice. Traditionally, Counselling Psychology has demonstrated an interest in issues of social justice (Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Ivey & Collins, 2003), often addressing these issues through advocacy and working to empower disadvantaged populations to challenge oppression, marginalization, discrimination and injustice (Fouad, Gertein & Toporek, 2006).

In a society where we have to be concerned about causing offensive and political correctness we have learned to fear religion rather than embrace difference. A fundamental aspect of the Counselling Psychologist training and practice is to engage in ones' own reflections, perhaps through mandatory personal therapy, so it is important to acknowledge ones' own prejudices particularly of potential client groups. By challenging the popular discourses, and also illuminating a voice that is often unheard amongst popular British Muslim narratives, this encourages practicing clinicians to do this with other client groups. The more we fear issues of religion, the more we engage with the sensationalist political discourses of the 'extremists' Muslim as a community to be feared and never to be trusted. As Counselling Psychologists, we owe it to our discipline and to our clients to engage with issues of religion without fear. To admit when we don't know, and be curious of the differences between us. This article has attempted to show how as a second generation British Muslim living in the cosmopolitan capital of London, identity negotiation is complicated, exacerbated by current religiously fuelled political issues. As practitioners we could be sat in our clinical room, faced with a client just like one of the participants in this study. If we do not explicitly discuss and engage with their religious beliefs, we would miss out on the wealth of information that has emerged within this research, including issues of female sexuality, personal understandings of womanhood and conversely manhood, interpersonal relationships, gender based inequality and identity conceptualisation.

Ideas for future research

In the first instance, it would be beneficial if the study presented here were replicated with a researcher of a different background, or perhaps someone who was not a hijab wearer, as to explore what narratives would be co-created between researcher and participant if the researcher was not overtly identifiable as a Muslim. Equally, if the study were replicated across different cities within Britain or other parts of the world, as the political landscape of London would undoubtedly impact participant experiences and the narratives shared. Similarly, the researcher would be curious of what narratives would be presented if the study were replicated in a focus group setting, made up of both men and women. Further to this, the split sense of self was an unexpected account by narrators, and this would be an important area for further exploration. It may be useful to look at this at a younger population

group, possibly focusing on young people and the impact of this distancing of parts of themselves on their sense of self.

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As I draw this portfolio to a close, I am left with some final reflections. This portfolio is presented as a three components, bound by a shared commonality. On reviewing each component and the final piece as a whole, I feel that CAT would have been an appropriate model to apply to my research, to consider the dual identity of my British Muslim sample from the perspective of multiple selves, and to consider these relational patterns. I have debated doing this, but ultimately decided to resist, as I feel that in applying a distinct model of therapy, I would have been succumbing to the fearful and pleasing aspects of my own relational patterns. To apply CAT to my research, or any other model of therapy, would be an afterthought attempt to concretely link my research to therapeutic practice. I have decided against suggesting models of working with this client group, and instead I have attempted to argue the applicability of this research, and of these ideas, to clinical practice from a wider, societal perspective.

In many ways this portfolio represents parts of myself over the last four years. I am both the subject and the audience of each part of the portfolio. We are currently living in a time and society in which being Muslim has become fundamentally political, and I often find that I am aware that I wear my religion on my body through an Islamic headscarf. I have noted in the days following so-called 'Islamic' terrorist attacks an unspoken knot of unease with people around me, the tone of suspicion as I am invariably asked 'what I thought' about these acts, as if people wish to 'check' what kind of Muslim I am.

I am the British Muslim Londoner trying to understand how I sit on both sides of what can feel like a very hostile fence. I am the woman who felt misunderstood and disconnected from others around me, struggling to understand who I am, leaving others just as unable to do the same. I am the Counselling Psychologist in practice who is faced with clients of religious systems that I may not subscribe to, who has feared opening up a discussion on how this lens impacts my clients experience of their world. The process that I have engaged in to construct this portfolio has facilitated my own learning and development. The courage

demonstrated by my participants has inspired me to find my own courage; both in the quest of my own truth as well as with my clients as I journey with them on a path of their own understanding.

I recall the day that I interviewed for my place on the Counselling Psychology training at City University of London. For some time before this I had felt that I had lost myself. My biggest learning over the last four years has been that which I have learnt about myself. Who I am, how I understand who I am and how this allows me to be with others. Through the process of training not only have I found who I am as a Counselling Psychologist, but I can also say that I have found who I am as a woman. As a Muslim. As a British Londoner. As Mariam.