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Name of Supervisor: Dr Eric Kaufmann

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**THE IMPACT OF ANTI-MUSLIM PREJUDICE ON BRITISH NATIONAL FOR MUSLIMS  
AND NON-MUSLIMS**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Anti-Muslim prejudice varies in terms of degree and manifestation both nationally and regionally. This paper will explore the impact it has in Britain as a whole and will argue that its rise and increasingly mainstream manifestation will have long term effects on how individual national identity for both Muslims and non-Muslims is defined and expressed as well as for social cohesion if left unchallenged. It will argue that anti-Muslim prejudice is now another societal force that is moulding the nature of society and the definition of what British identity means today and what it could mean in the future.

The theory concerning the impact of 'othering', social construction theory and approaches to national identity will be outlined in order to present what is already established. This will then be explored in the context of anti-Muslim prejudice as a contemporary form of othering in Britain. Primary data, based on interviews and surveys, will be presented and reactions to anti-Muslim prejudice explored before concluding that there are various reactions to it in Britain today and that evidence supporting the different approaches to nationalism can be found. As an increasingly influential societal force there is an urgent need to ensure that British national identity defines its 'self' in opposition' to prejudice as the 'other', in order to avoid a deepening division along religious lines, prevent an erosion of social cohesion and weakening or narrowing of British national identity. As a result, it is concluded that anti-Muslim prejudice has the potential to be either a fundamentally corrosive societal force that is a threat to a positive and inclusive British national identity or a source of unity and strength for British national identity.

## **2. TERMINOLOGY**

Despite acknowledgement that the word 'Islamophobia' is flawed, the Runnymede Trust report (1997, p1) describes it as '*a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims*'. Since the report was published, this definition has been '*shown to be flawed and open to contestation and rejection*' (Allen, 2011, p 6), mainly centring around the accusation that it '*stifles legitimate criticism of Islam, and that it demonises and stigmatises*

*anyone who wishes to engage in such criticism'* (Runnymede Report, 1997, p4).

Therefore, some prefer to use alternative terms, such as '*Muslimophobia*' (Modood, 2001, In European Muslim Research Centre, 2010, p52), anti-Muslim hatred or anti-Muslim prejudice etc. To avoid such confusion, this paper will use 'anti-Muslim prejudice'.

Kalin (2011, p6) argues that anti-Muslim prejudice is a form of 'cultural racism' as the othering of Muslims is based on culture rather than skin colour, which stereotypes Islam and Muslims as associated with '*terrorism, violence, and "fundamentalism"*' (Said, 1997, pxxi). Muslims are also stereotyped as a monolithic, singular community, where diversity, critical thinking and human agency do not exist. Modood (2001, In European Muslim Research Centre, 2010, p53), explains that '*cultural racism is likely to be particularly aggressive against those minority communities that want to maintain – and not just defensively – some of the basic elements of their culture or religion*', which is the case with many Muslims in Britain today.

Muslims are also depicted as 'alien', not belonging and a threat to Britain, providing an 'other' for the national 'self' to be defined against. As Said (1997, p1v) explains, '*Islam is often depicted as the enemy, responsible for everything we do not happen to like about the world's new political, social, and economic patterns*' and this is particularly divisive within a multicultural, multi-faith country such as Britain. It has led to questions concerning where British Muslims' loyalty lies – to the Muslim Ummah or to Britain (e.g., Bunting, 2004) and this polarisation has resulted in different degrees of anti-Muslim prejudice - both overt and covert, discrimination and hate crime, all of which encourage further division, lack interaction, suspicion and fear.

There is a counter-argument presented by others, such as Douglas Murray (Director, Centre of Social Cohesion), which suggest that claims of anti-Muslim prejudice are attempts to suppress criticism of Islam and Muslims and that Muslims '*have no right to have more hate laws, or hate crime laws, or hate speech laws just to defend Islam*'

(Murray, 2010). Such commentators argue that anti-Muslim prejudice is not a form of racism and is not deserving of legal protection because it is the believer's choice to be Muslim, whereas someone cannot choose the colour of their skin. This has prompted some, such as Kenan Malik (2005), to consider Islamophobia a '*myth*'. However, Allen (2011b, p7) argues that anti-Muslim prejudice and its impact are very real and cannot simply be discarded as Muslims playing the '*Islamophobia card*' and explains that the difference between anti-Muslim prejudice and criticism of Islam or the Muslim community is when such criticism '*becomes used to promote, encourage or justify discrimination, hatred, bigotry or even violence*' (Allen, 2011b, p8). As with racist crimes, where the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999 resulted in the UK police being '*encouraged to give primacy to the perception of a minority ethnic victim concerning the motivation for the crime committed against them*' (European Muslim Research Centre, 2010, p103), anti-Muslim prejudice inspired crimes should, arguably, be defined by the victim's own understanding of the motive behind the action, and be recorded as such.

### **3. THEORY**

This literature review will first assess the work that has been completed concerning 'othering' before moving on to social construction theory and approaches to national identity. This will provide a theoretical background to how identity of the 'self' and 'other' are constructed and the different reactions to such labelling. It is clear that there are varying opinions regarding the degree of influence society has on an individual and the role of an individual's own choice and this will be explored here. This will then be looked at in reference to British national identity and anti-Muslim prejudice in Britain today.

#### **3.1 OTHERING**

Said's (1979) conception of Orientalism highlights the way the Orientalist 'other' is stereotyped, overly simplified and described as exotic, dangerous and uncivilised. Both the 'self' and the 'other' are presented as monolithic wholes, with the 'other' to be treated with '*hostility and fear*' (Said, 1997, p4). In contemporary Britain, the traditional 'other', in the form of non-whites, non-Europeans and non-Christians, are

now within the same geographical reach as the 'self' and is part of the 'self', part of the national community. Historically, we have seen various groups being 'othered' – these have included the Jewish, Irish and African-Caribbean communities and it now appears to be increasingly the Muslim community who fill this polarised position (although it is important not to assume that discrimination of these other groups has ceased). While this new 'othered' group is a faith group rather than an ethnic group, the same features of racism are apparent – negative stereotyping, simplified generalisation, prejudice and discrimination.

Labels often mask people's multiple, coexisting identities by providing overly simplified definitions, with 'othered' groups defined by that sole characteristic, which is presented as being at odds with the 'self'. For example, when defining Muslims as the 'other', coexisting identities such as Britishness are ignored, raising the question of loyalty to the nation and suggesting that individuals must choose if they are British or Muslim – for it is assumed they cannot be both. This need to label the 'other' requires '*social imaginery*' (Castoriadis, 1998, In Palacios, 2009, p18) and imagined explanations – i.e., the idea of a monolithic, pure, non-Muslim British national identity and fear of Islamification. This has prompted commentators, such as Said (1997) to state that '*malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign cultures in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians*' (pxii). This can be particularly damaging to the 'other' group' as Eriksen (2002) explains that negative stereotypes '*can sometimes function as self-fulfilling prophecies. A dominating group can stunt the intellectual development of a dominated group by systematically telling them they are inferior*' (p25).

### **3.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY**

Social construction theory addresses how individuals participate in their social reality and construct their beliefs and interpretations about themselves, others and the relationships between them based on their existing framework of understanding, forming individual perceptions of the world. Future events and social interaction

either fit within the framework or are classified as exceptions. Such reappropriation of experiences is part of an individual's natural learning process and labelling aids this ongoing process, which is susceptible to change. This theory offers an explanation as to how an 'us' and 'them' mentality and labelling can exist and also the '*different degrees of hostility and violence*' that are expressed towards the 'other' (Palacious, 2009, p37).

The theory suggests that the labelling of the 'other' is necessary for the identity of the 'self' and that there is an expectation that the 'other' will be assimilated into the 'self' to eradicate the difference or threat. Palacious (2009) argues that individuals construct their own identity using external discourses and that the 'other' is seen as deviant to the norms of society – highlighting an 'us' and 'them' distinction where the 'them' are defined as those who have not assimilated enough. Muslims are often accused of not assimilating enough to mainstream culture. For example, Rt Hon Jack Straw MP (2006) described the Muslim female face veil as '*such a visible statement of separation and of difference*'. The self's own identity is also '*based on negation, and its survival dependent upon the perpetuation of such negation*' (Palacious, 2009, p19), which explains why prejudice and discrimination can be expressed so forcefully by some. Social construction theory also explains why there is variance in individuals' reactions to labels as it provides room for active, individual learning and response while explaining that this takes place around an established, developing structure of meaning.

Labelling therefore offers the opportunity to both the labeller and labelled to play an active role and react to the label– either positively, negatively, accepting, challenging or reappropriating it. However, such reactions do have the ability to '*become a part of our lived experiences; they can become a part of one's life, one's identity and hence, difficult to replace*' (Hudak, 2001, p9), suggesting that reactions can lead to more permanent changes for society. This combination of societal influence and individual agency explains the variation in the reactions to being labelled as 'other'. This paper argues that relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain



today are still being negotiated through social interaction and influencing British national identity as a result.

### **3.3 NATIONAL IDENTITY**

National identity is viewed through three main approaches, outlined briefly here.

Perennialism states that national identity is based on an antiquity of relationships / bonds between citizens that '*flow from a sense of natural – some would say spiritual – affinity*' (Geertz, 1963, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p31). Van den Berge (1978, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994) states that this is based on kin selection with stronger bonds forming between those who are perceived to be more similar. Geertz explains that in modern, multicultural nations, ethnic and civic loyalties can conflict, especially when the nation's political integrity is questioned or threatened. For example, issues relating to foreign policy, such as the Iraq War, have inspired groups, such as Al-Muhajiroun, to protest against Britain's military involvement overseas, inflaming social tensions. Van den Berge (1978, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p102) also explains that there are often 'attempts to present coercion as reciprocity and exchange' in modern, democratic societies as a means of conflict management. This is arguably the case with the British government's policies relating to multiculturalism and integration. Nationalism in a multi-ethnic society attempts to ensure loyalty from all citizens and social cohesion on the basis of a reciprocity of rights and responsibilities of citizens and state but nationalism, Perennialists argue, is ethnically based.

Ethnosymbolists, in contrast, argue that in an attempt to provide a '*resolution of their intellectual and emotional dilemmas*' (Smith, 1989, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p116), both nationalism and ethnicity have been defined by cultural leaders, educators etc., to provide a definition of the group, its origins and history to the masses in the reality of a modernising, enlightened, globally aware society. By providing a sense of authenticity, such identities offer dignity and a sense of belonging to citizens. Hutchinson (1987, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994) argues that political and cultural nationalism are different, with the former providing an

inclusive, multicultural, law based identity for citizens which '*transcend[s] cultural differences*' (p122), while the latter is ethnically exclusive, an evolving, 'organic entity' (p122) with '*its historic identity and status order – continuously renovated in terms of the needs of each generation*' (p123). This renovation, Hutchinson argues, is aided by educators, artists and scholarly elites whose creativity provides meaning and identity through '*myth-making*' (p123) – including stories of national success (often including a nostalgic, '*golden age*' (p123)) and suffering. This inspires the next generation to '*recreate*' the idea of the nation as a living principle in the lives of the people' (p124), which people can identify with and develop an '*emotional loyalty*' (p125) to the nation, through strengthening and reappropriating national identity as a result.

Modernism, the third approach, argues that national identity is the product of modernisation, in particular globalisation, immigration and technology. Gellner (1964, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994) argues that a nation, and hence national identity, is invented through mass literacy, common language and education and he states that national identity is a product of '*objective, practical necessity*' (p56), led by the proletariat and political classes, with the benefits of personal status, wealth and opportunity. This is produced through '*invented traditions*' (Hobsbawm, 1969, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p76), '*which are often deliberate and always innovative*'. These traditions are constructed through education, public ceremonies, rituals, monuments and national symbols (flags etc). With the development of civil society came aspirations for identity, purpose and belonging for the masses. Such visible signs of national identity provided this. Anderson (1983) adds that the existence of '*imagined communities*', national consciousness and identity, only made possible through the development of secularism, democracy, print distribution / media and capitalism which, once in place, can be exploited for the benefit of the elite. Breuilly (1982, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994) also speaks of a need for an authentic, unique, self-determined sense of national community to '*make sense of complex social and political arrangements*' (p110) which modernity has produced. It also gives legitimacy to politicians who draw upon such needs and understanding in their own political projects to regenerate national sentiments and mobilise public support. This

approach has a *'particularly powerful appeal because of their quality of self-reference and the way they took existing sentiments and actions and transmuted them into political ideology'* (p112).

Therefore, Modernists could argue that the modern, multicultural demographic reality of contemporary Britain has made it necessary for a more inclusive, civic based national identity to provide a sense of belonging and identification and loyalty to the nation. This has been aided by government policies that encourage a common, shared English language and invented traditions taught through the national curriculum, citizenship test, displays of the Union Jack etc. This national 'imagined community' provides a sense of stability but also *'provides the identity with the 'moral legitimacy' to attack what threatens it and restore social order'* (Palacious, 2009, p18). National media facilitates this continuous 'imagined community' and is a socially accepted means by which the government and elites communicate 'invented traditions' to the masses and draw popular support through appealing to 'British values'.

#### **4. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND OTHERING**

These three approaches to national identity can provide insights into why 'othering', in the form of anti-Muslim prejudice, exists today.

As explained above, Perennialism explains that the most 'natural' form of national identity is ethnically based. Van den Berge (1978, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994) explains that in order for kin selection to be successful, difference between groups needs to be more obvious than those within groups. This difference can be either physical or cultural and can form the basis of prejudice and discrimination. Huntington's (1993) theory of the 'clash of civilisations' supports this theory, suggesting anti-Muslim prejudice is the unavoidable result of a deep rooted, ancient 'clash' between those holding different outlooks on life – different views of religion and politics etc. It follows that Muslims living in the West will unavoidably clash with the Western 'way of life', hence posing an internal threat to the 'self'.

Ethno-symbolism, as outlined previously, explains that a sense of national identity draws upon historical myths provoking an emotional reaction to a perceived national threat and the desire to defend the nation. Ethnosymbolists might argue that anti-Muslim prejudice draws from a biased teaching of history, images in books, cartoons etc, where Muslims are depicted as the 'other'. For example, Derrida (2004, In Cherif, Mustapha, 2008) claims that modern European history only features aspects that are Judeo-Christian and Islamic contributions have been suppressed. Without teaching how the Islamic world has contributed positively to Western advances, the British general public are encouraged to believe that there is very little history of Muslims contributing to the nation. This is despite evidence that 'there has been a Muslim presence in Britain for several centuries, and for even longer the arts and architecture of western Europe, as also European science, mathematics and philosophy, have been influenced by the Islamic world' (Runnymede Report, 1997, p1). Such an internalised historical account provides the basis for an exclusive, monolithic 'self' identity which excludes Muslims and fosters resentment in the form of anti-Muslim prejudice. Sarte (1975, In Hudak & Kihn, 1975, p63) adds that 'the act of naming someone as 'other', of dehumanizing and crudely labelling, is a self-destructive act – to deny one's own humanity, one's own historical place within the world – acts of denial'. Therefore, by labelling the Muslim community in Britain as 'other' the British 'self' suffers, resulting in its full potential not being realised economically, politically and internationally.

Modernists, as seen above, explain 'othering' as a 'means of exclusion for the benefit of the privileged, and a means of identification' (Gellner, 1964, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p62) in a complex, increasingly interactive world. Stereotypes and labels relating to different ethnic / faith groups help create order by defining who is an 'insider' and who an 'outsider'. They can also be useful in 'justify[ing] privileges and differences in access to a society's resources' (Eriksen, 2002, p25) and attempts to justify the ill treatment of those labelled 'other'. This suggests that the labeller benefits from scapegoating others, blaming problems experienced by the collective on a minority group. For example, communities have been scapegoated / blamed in times of economic crisis. Brueilly (1982, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p111)

highlights that ‘repetition through speeches, newspaper articles – is an essential part of the work’, emphasising the role of politicians and the media in the process of ‘othering’ and defining of national identity.

## **5. ANTI-MUSLIM PREJUDICE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN**

While anti-Muslim prejudice is a fairly new subject, it has been written about quite extensively recently. However, addressing the impact of anti-Muslim prejudice on British national identity does not seem to have been specifically addressed.

Therefore, anti-Muslim prejudice in Britain today is the case study for this paper.

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, former Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain (2011, interview), explained that the ‘*climate started to become more negative*’ towards Muslims, in the summer of 2011 in some northern cities. In recent years popularity for far right groups in Britain has also increased with two Members of European Parliament elected for Britain from the British National Party (BNP) and the formation and growth of the English Defence League (EDL) since 2009. Both groups describe Muslims as a problematic threat to Britain, its way of life and identity.

However, anti-Muslim prejudice has arguably become more mainstream, described by Esposito and Kalin (2011) as ‘*becoming a social cancer*’ (pxxxiv). In January 2011, Baroness Warsi declared that anti-Muslim prejudice has become so normalised and socially acceptable that it had ‘*now passed the dinner-table-test*’ (Cabinet Office, 2011). This was something those in authority had forewarned following 9/11 – with Mr Westwood, the Chairman of the Race & Community Business Group of the Association of Chief Police Officers reassuring the Muslim Council of Britain that the ‘*British Police service is sensitive to the potential of victimisation or even demonization of the Muslim community*’ (Hamid and Sherif, 2002, p30).

Palacios (2009, p16) describes a similar move from the far right to the mainstream in the reaction to communism in Chile where ‘*the enemy was no longer the militant – but a society that has been poisoned by the seeds of ‘amoral communism’. Youth and children alike had been exposed and contaminated*’. This displacement of blame and

fear from a small, militant minority to a wider community can be seen to be true for some regarding Muslims in Britain, where the entire community, rather than the radical minority, can be looked at with suspicion. For example, groups such as 'Stop the Islamification of Europe', genuinely believe that Europe is under siege, threatened by the Muslim community and Islam. Such fear for national security has been the motivation for the government's Prevent policy, which has been heavily criticised for viewing engagement with the Muslim community through 'through the prism of security' (MCB, 2011). As Esposito and Kalin (2011, pxxvii ) explain, this is a dangerous development as *'policies that single out and alienate members of a society based on their ethnicity or religion do very little to promote integration; in fact, they do the opposite'*.

## **6. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used for this paper includes primary research in the form of qualitative surveys and informal interviews.

Pilot surveys were sent to one person from each of the categories, written feedback was provided and the surveys adjusted slightly as a result. This was a useful part of the process as it ensured the effectiveness of the questions.

The qualitative surveys were administered through snowball sampling. This involves the researcher asking people they personally know to complete the survey and requesting that they ask their contacts to also complete it. In order for the survey to have further geographical reach, the survey was established online through [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com). Potential participants were informed that there were ten questions, the survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, that answers would remain anonymous unless they specifically gave their name/organisation and only completed surveys would be analysed. Two surveys, one for Muslims and another for non-Muslims were designed (appendix 1+2 respectively). The first question focused on demographic details – the most important being nationality and religion, to establish if the answers could be included. Only the surveys of those who answered 'British' to nationality have been

included and only those who answered 'Islam / Muslim' for religion of the Muslim survey and anything other than 'Islam / Muslim' for the non-Muslim survey. Open, brief, unbiased questions were used to explore the attitudes of participants. After a month of circulating the surveys, 87 completed surveys were received from Muslims and 55 from non-Muslims.

The second method involved two informal interviews. The interviewees were selected due to their personal experience with anti-Muslim prejudice and their positions within the Muslim community. The interviews were recorded and notes taken during the interviews and the questions were open, inviting the participants to share their thoughts. The individuals interviewed were Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari (Former Secretary General, The Muslim Council of Britain) and Mr Azad Ali (Chair, The Muslim Safety Forum). Any quotes given in this paper from these interviews have been confirmed by the interviewees.

## **7. DATA ANALYSIS**

### **7.1 MUSLIM RESPONSES**

Of the 87 completed surveys received, 36/87 people gave their name/organisation (an optional question). Respondents were from across a range of sectors including the police, education, public sector, health sector and unionists. With regards to location, respondents were from all over the UK, including Ireland and Scotland. In terms of ethnicity, the responses were also mixed, with the largest groups being Pakistani (23/87), Bengali (10/87) and Caucasian / White/ N. European (10/87) but there were also Afghan, Black, and Arab respondents, among others. There was also a good range of ages, with the youngest respondent being 17 and the oldest being 62. The majority of respondents (47/87) were born Muslims but there were also 12 converts who completed the survey.

When responding to the question 'What does being British mean to you?', the responses were varied, as expected. Seven respondents stated that they were proud of being British or that they felt patriotic. However, two of these seven expressed their disappointment at the discrimination they faced and another four respondents

stated that being British '*didn't mean much*' to them, with one stating that '*I am ashamed of the way our country is run and ashamed of the way our government acts*'. With these four exceptions, the respondents were either neutral or positive about what being British meant to them.

Most respondents mentioned several aspects of British identity. First, and in no particular order, there was the geographical element, a sense of it being home, having a British passport etc. Second, there were references to multicultural values, freedom of speech, inclusivity, democracy and choice. Here, one respondent stated that being British meant '*supporting the underdog*', suggesting Britain is hospitable and unlikely to tolerate prejudice. Third, there was mention of the benefits and opportunities available to British citizens, such as education and the NHS, as well as the need to contribute to society. Fourth, the laws of the land, security and human rights were recalled. Fifth, was British history and the monarchy. This range of responses supports the suggestion that British identity is evolving and means different things to different people. As all these aspects, with the possible exception of British history, are open to all citizens to partake in – regardless of religion – this supports Barth's (1969) theory that variance between groups itself is not the cause of social boundaries or, in this case, to British national identity.

For the question 'Do you feel that Islam conflicts, complements or does not impact a Muslim's British identity? Please explain the reasons for your answer', the majority stated that they felt Islam either complemented (38/87) or did not conflict (12/87) with their British identity, in fact, one respondent stated that '*Islam adds value to my British identity*'. The reasons given focused on the values that are understood to be both part of Islamic teachings and inherent to British identity, e.g., tolerance, respecting difference, ethical living, family values, equality, respecting the laws of the land, contributing to society, care of the elderly and socially disadvantaged, women's rights and justice.

8/87 respondents, however, said they felt Islam conflicts with their British identity and there were other mixed responses to the question. The reasons given for



perceived conflict were mainly in reference to social and cultural aspects, for example, British 'pub culture' as something Muslims are unable to take an active part in and, as a result, feel compromised, excluded or awkward. However, as another respondent recognised, this also affects other minority groups and British culture itself is not defined by it. Other respondents mentioned a lack of prayer facilities available in Britain and that dress codes are in conflict with Islam. Two respondents stated that the conflict was dependent on how practising/visible a Muslim's identity and this is supported by the finding of the European Muslim Research Centre (2010). The issues raised, however, refer to practicalities rather than fundamental values and attitudes. Therefore, while it could be practically challenging for a practising Muslim in Britain, Muslims generally feel included and that they belong. This is contrary to the 'British or Muslim?' identity crisis which was even referred to by the Prime Minister (Number 10, 2011). This again supports Barth's (1969, In Eriksen, 2002) theory of social boundaries being created by an overemphasis of variance, as anti-Muslim prejudice ignores the many similarities raised by respondents.

For the question 'Do you experience any challenges as a direct result of being a British Muslim? If so, please provide examples', 24/87 respondents said they felt no such challenge but 23/87 respondents, reported being challenged by the prejudice of non-Muslims. 16/87 respondents reported feeling that their biggest challenge was regarding how they dressed as Muslims, emphasising again that the level of practice/visibility can impact how Muslims feel regarding how they are perceived by others. 12/87 respondents mentioned the struggle that results from the media's negative emphasis of Muslims, 10/87 respondents recalled feeling at a disadvantage regarding employment and another respondent said they felt they were 'viewed through the prism of religion alone'. These responses suggest that being a Muslim in Britain can be challenging, mainly due to a lack of understanding and anti-Muslim prejudice from non-Muslims. This struggle is generally an accepted part of being a Muslim in Britain today and, again, supports Barth's (1969, In Eriksen, 2002) theory.

For the question 'What does anti-Muslim prejudice mean to you and who/what do you think is to blame for it?', there was a general consensus that anti-Muslim

prejudice '*manifests itself in many ways*', as one respondent stated and is another form of racism. Reference was again made to being seen through a '*security lens*', as a threat, a hatred, resentment and '*having a negative preconception of Muslims*'. It appears from these responses that the issue of anti-Muslim prejudice is widely understood and recognised by the Muslim community in Britain.

The answers for 'What/who is to blame for anti-Muslim prejudice?' were more varied. The vast majority (56/87) mentioned the media and two respondents cited two specific sources – the Daily Mail and the Express. The media was accused of '*sensationalism*' and for '*reporting stereotypical ideas and constantly reinforcing and highlighting differences*' between Muslims and non-Muslims. Dr Bari (2011 – interview) explained that there has been a consistent effort from sections of the media to undermine the Muslim community and create the perception that all Muslims are radicalised or failing to do enough to fight radicalisation. This understanding is supported by Said (1997) who notes that '*the deliberately created associations between Islam and fundamentalism ensure that the average reader comes to see Islam and fundamentalism as essentially the same thing*' (pxvi). A further 22/87 respondents cited politicians as being partly to blame – with references made to both domestic and foreign policy. The modernist approach to national identity highlights the importance of asking what benefit is being reaped from such coverage and political stances. The Ethno-Symbolist approach explains that there are national myths that already exist in the minds of the masses, so reporting and forming policies these reinforce and match public opinion.

Some respondents (32/87) blamed the Muslim community itself for anti-Muslim prejudice. References were made to extremism/terrorism but also to those ignorant of their faith, those who choose to self-segregate, those who do not communicate with non-Muslims and an insufficient contribution from the Muslim community as a whole to wider issues that affect everyone. A significant number of respondents (25/87) blamed ignorance and a lack of comprehensive education in mainstream society about Islam and Muslims. Only 10/87 respondents referred to far right groups, such as the BNP and EDL suggesting that anti-Muslim prejudice is genuinely

perceived as a mainstream problem today. These responses indicate that the causes and manifestations of anti-Muslim prejudice are varied and widely acknowledged by Muslims.

For the question 'a) Have you, or anyone you know, experienced anti-Muslim prejudice either directly / indirectly? Please give examples. b) Was the incident reported? If yes, who to? If no, why not?', the vast majority of respondents (62/87 or 71%) had experienced anti-Muslim prejudice themselves or knew someone who had. In giving this figure, the incidents described have not been analysed to determine if they should be considered examples of anti-Muslim prejudice, instead – led by the example of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry - the categorisation has been left to the victim/respondent. This figure is supported by the Open Society Institute (2005) reported that '*80% of Muslim respondents reported being subjected to Islamophobia*' (p18-9). Such responses indicate that anti-Muslim prejudice is real in Britain today and how behaviour of the labelled can be influenced as a result. The experiences included violent assaults; one lady had her arm broken, a man had been punched, others had been spat at and Muslim women had their headscarves pulled off. Other experiences included having chillies and stones thrown at them, being thrown off a bus, children receiving '*substandard treatment at school*', businesses being attacked, graffiti outside the local mosque, confrontations with the EDL and abusive verbal insults, such as being called '*terrorists*', '*ninja*' and '*bin Laden*'. It is also interesting to note that two respondents recalled how they/others discouraged their wives/daughters from appearing visibly Muslim in public, i.e., wearing the niqaab or hijaab, for fear of their safety.

From this 62, only nine respondents stated that they had reported the incident to the police, while 36 respondents said they had not and two said that they only reported some incidents (some respondents did not answer this part of the question). The reasons given for this substantial under-reporting were varied. Some dismissed reporting as such experiences are '*now routine for me and other Muslims living in UK*' and others feared '*nothing will get done because of it*'. Other respondents claimed they '*[didn't] know how to or who to go to*', and that the '*police [are] the worst anti-*

*Muslims in the UK*'. Even some of those who did report the incidents recalled a lack of satisfaction with the outcome and one respondent reported that '*no concrete action [was] taken due to loop holes in the judicial system*', referring to the fact that Muslims are not protected legally from prejudice in the same way other faith groups, such as Sikhs and Jews are by the Race Relations Act 1976. From these responses and other studies, such as those by the European Muslim Research Centre (2010), it is again clear that anti-Muslim prejudice is a real, lived experience for many Muslims in Britain and that the systems in place to protect Muslims urgently need attention. These would preferably be community led to avoid issues of distrust of the police and legal system.

For the question 'Do you think anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is rising? Why do you think this is and what evidence is there for your answer?', the majority of respondents (59/87) believe it is on the rise, while 17/87 were unsure - with two questioning if it was just reported more now. Only 9/87 thought it was not on the rise – with one respondent stating they believed it was actually declining. Of those who did think it was rising, 14/59 respondents specifically mentioned the EDL as evidence, having only been established in 2009. Other responses were based on a '*gut instinct*', media headlines and the fact they have '*heard [of] more incidents*'. Another respondent cited work by the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMPP) as showing a rise in the '*number of attacks, type of attacks and severity of attacks against Muslims, their property, places of worship and their graveyards*'. Other respondents recalled the '*recent rhetoric from various MPs*', with one respondent specifically mentioning the '*indifferent attitude by the government towards the BNP and right wing movements*', arguably evident in recent reports that '*Detective Chief Superintendent Adrian Tudway, the officer in charge of political extremism in this country, refuses to accept that the EDL is a far right organisation*' (Hope not Hate, 2010). Again minority groups from the Muslim community were also thought to contribute to the problem. However, one respondent mentioned that pro-Muslim views were also on the rise. An example of this can be seen by the thousands of people who demonstrated in Tower Hamlets in September 2011 as a counter-demonstration to the EDL (UAF, 2011). The above responses provide further

evidence that anti-Muslim prejudice in Britain is on the rise and becoming more mainstream and that many sources are to blame.

The final three questions (see appendix 1) will be addressed in chapter 8.

## **7.2 NON-MUSLIM RESPONSES**

55 completed surveys were received from non-Muslims from all over the UK, including Wales and Scotland. In terms of ethnicity, the responses were less mixed than for the Muslim respondents. With the represented groups being Caucasian (47/55), Mixed heritage (5/55), Jewish (1/55) and Filipino (1/55). There was again a good variation of ages, with the youngest respondent being 16 and the oldest being 75. Those who stated they were Christian were the largest group of respondents (25/55) but there were also 18 atheists, 3 Jews, 2 Buddhists among others who completed the surveys.

When responding to the question ‘What does being British mean to you?’, the responses were varied, again as expected. Only 3/55 (5%) non-Muslim respondents stated that they were proud of being British or that they felt patriotic – in contrast to 7/87 (8%) Muslim respondents. 11/55 respondents (20%) stated specifically that their British identity did not mean much to them, in comparison to 4/87 Muslim respondents (8%). This is in keeping with Gallup’s 2009 report where 77% of British Muslims stated that they extremely or very strongly identified with their country, while 50% of the British public claimed the same.

Most respondents again mentioned several aspects of British identity. These again included geography, multicultural values, the benefits, opportunities and responsibilities of being a British citizen, the laws of the land and British history. One respondent also claimed that being British is *‘something that is passed on from previous generations and cannot be achieved by simply living here’*, which reflects the Perennialist approach to nationalism, outlined above. However, non-Muslim responses also included ‘anti-racism’ and there were conflicting comments about the government’s foreign policy and Britain’s colonial history with one respondent

claiming that being British meant '*pride in our armed forces*' and another stated that being British meant '*Not a lot nowadays since we have been killing and maiming people in other countries for decades*'. The former, anti-racism, suggests that non-Muslims are more likely than Muslims to see Britain as principled against prejudice, perhaps due to some Muslims still experiencing it regularly. The latter – the British armed forces and foreign policy – is a recognised point of contention, where criticism from Muslims is often interpreted as disloyalty. However, Dr Bari (2011, interview) explained that being British and criticising Britain's foreign policy and the government is perfectly right in this country and is something that that all citizens, regardless of religion, should be allowed to express. These responses again confirm that British national identity means different things to different people.

For the question 'What does multiculturalism mean to you and do you think it is successful/failing in Britain today?', more respondents stated that multiculturalism was successful in Britain (24/55), than those who thought it had failed (11/55) and 8/55 respondents stated that its success varied from geographic area and by generation. The reasons given for multiculturalism being a success were varied and included the benefits to Britain economically and socially, making the country '*stronger and more interesting*' and that it decreased the risk of discrimination and prejudice for everyone. However, the reasons given for multiculturalism failing were also varied. Several respondents stated that it had encouraged some communities to become more segregated and had provided a means to '*force people to identify with certain cultures which they may not have spontaneously chosen*' and '*implies several distinct 'cultures' living side by side, which doesn't reflect where the country is or where it should be headed*'. Some respondents felt multiculturalism was '*too easily hijacked by extremists (of any persuasion)*' and that the rise in the BNP and EDL, the '*perception of an imbalance or losing 'Britishness*' and the continued existence of bigotry and tension provided evidence of it failing. However, another respondent claimed that '*it is working - not without struggle and conflict - it's a process we have to go through*'. Such responses suggest that there is an awareness and recognition that some work still needs to be done to unite Britain's faith and non-communities. The British Social Attitudes Survey (2010) supports this finding that '*just over half of*

*people in Britain (52%) fear that the UK is deeply divided along religious lines and are particularly concerned about Islam compared with other faiths'*. However, it is suggested here (chapter 8.3) that the reasons for self segregation need further explanation and that anti-Muslim prejudice is fuelling desire for separation on both sides. This again supports Barth's (1969, In Eriksen, 2002) theory that the emphasis of difference leads to social boundaries.

For the question 'Do you feel that Islam conflicts, complements or does not impact a Muslim's British identity? Please explain the reasons for your answer', many respondents felt that Islam either complements (14/55) or does not conflict (8/55) with British national identity, while others gave mixed responses. The reasons given were similar to those responses given by Muslim respondents and focused on the values that are seen to be part of Islamic teachings as well as British identity, e.g., democracy, civic responsibility, charity & voluntary work, equal opportunities. One respondent even claimed that *'the Muslims I know seem to implement our values more than us! We can learn a lot from them'*.

Only 2/55 respondents said they felt Islam conflicts with British identity. Their reasons included that *'British identity is about liberalism, freedom of expression and supporting one's country. Islam is not liberal, disallows freedom of expression, is sexist, homophobic and exclusionist'* and that *'wearing of the burka also conflicts with what women in this country fought to obtain-equal rights for all -Being British is about friendliness, openness and this puts a barrier between people'*. Another respondent commented that *'People living in Britain should not feel that Britain's attitudes, values etc. are pathological or degenerate. Often I feel that Muslims are guilty of this sort of contempt rather than celebrating of British culture'*, which contributes to the 'us' and 'them' polarisation. Comments such as these suggest that the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice and defining British national identity in opposition to Islam is a complex, two way process, with both Muslims and non-Muslims contributing to this problem, 'othering' each other (explored further below).

The answers for 'what/who is to blame for anti-Muslim prejudice?' were also varied. The media was again blamed by most (28/55), while the second largest group (17/55) blamed Muslims themselves for contributing to the problem. Most were clear in emphasising that a minority were to blame, but others mentioned a lack of integration, segregation and a failure of leadership in the Muslim community. Another blamed a tendency for Muslims to assume a '*victim mentality*', blaming anti-Muslim prejudice for any criticism of Islam or the Muslim community, as mentioned above. A lack of education and ignorance was also cited (13/55), 11/55 respondents blamed politicians and the far right were mentioned by seven respondents. These main contributors – the media, the Muslim community, ignorance and politicians were mentioned in the same order (highest to lowest number of responses) by both Muslims and non-Muslims, suggesting a consensus. Two respondents spoke of colonialism and a history of racism and intolerance in Britain. While both research groups provided very similar answers, only non-Muslim respondents mentioned colonialism and intolerance, arguably challenging the accusation of the finger pointing involved with Muslims assuming a victim mentality.

For the question 'Do you think anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is rising? Why do you think this is and what evidence is there for your answer?', many respondents (24/55) believe it is rising, seven respondents were unsure and four respondents stated it had declined since 7/7 and 9/11. Those who did think it was rising gave a variety of reasons. These included the rise of the far right, the tightening of immigration controls, the media's perceived bias, politicians' recent rhetoric, the rise of hate crimes one respondent said that anti-Muslim prejudice is now '*institutionalised in police use of stop and search and government policies like Prevent*'. Such responses reflect the modernist approach that political elites and the media are central to this increase.

Of the four respondents who said they felt that anti-Muslim prejudice was declining, their answers also suggested possible evidence. One respondent mentioned that '*Last year's elections and the failure of the BNP to gain seats backs this up, as does increased membership of organisations, such as Searchlight, and condemnation from*



*communities and local authorities of EDL marches*'. Another stated that some British politicians had been very clear that the mainstream British Muslim majority had condemned the terrorist attacks to avoid the whole Muslim community being mislabelled and another stated that there was better education and awareness now regarding equal opportunities in employment and in schools. In comparison to Muslim responses, less non-Muslims believe anti-Muslim prejudice to be on the rise, perhaps due to less personal experience.

Something which is often mentioned when discussing racism/anti-Muslim prejudice is the perceived threat to freedom of speech through individuals' fear of being accused of holding such prejudice. For the question, 'Do you feel that your freedom of speech is compromised by fears of being accused of anti-Muslim prejudice? If so, please give an example', the vast majority (40/55 – 73%) stated that they felt that their freedom of speech was not compromised in this way. However, 14/55 (25%) of respondents did feel their freedom of speech was compromised or threatened. Two of these respondents mentioned the extreme reactions from sections of the Muslim community regarding the Satanic verses and the Danish cartoons and feared their own comments and actions might be similarly misconstrued.

The final three questions (see appendix 2) will be addressed in chapter 9.

## **8. CHANGE IN THE EXPRESSION OF BRITISH NATIONAL IDENTITY AMONG MUSLIMS**

Anti-Muslim prejudice has certainly made Muslims more '*conscious of their Muslim identity*' and, as another survey respondent shared, '*being seen as 'different' always makes you question who and what you are and where you belong*'. For Muslims, reactions to anti-Muslim prejudice vary and can include identifying more or less with one of their coexisting identities (i.e., British or Muslim). Goffman (1959, In Eriksen, 2002, p22) claimed '*group membership was emphasised to the extent that it was overcommunicated in public rituals as well as in casual interaction*' and Eriksen (2002) explained that it can also be '*undercommunicated, which means that the actors try to play it down and not make it an important aspect of a situation (p22)*'.

This leads to varying ways in which British Muslims identify with their own British national identity due to anti-Muslim prejudice.

Some Muslims, as one survey respondent commented, believe anti-Muslim prejudice presents the problem as being that you '*can't be both*' British and Muslim as they are '*the antithesis of one another*'. This can lead to individuals trying to 'distance the two identities, in some cases causing them to go to extremes in either direction' as one respondent shared. Mr Ali (2011, interview), however, explained that such an 'identity crisis' in the British Muslim youth is in fact an unhelpful myth and creates unnecessary confusion. Dr Bari (2011, interview) described this 'us' and 'them' distinction is having on young Muslims as having a damaging, psychological impact. This, he explained, can lead to de-motivation and '*a cycle of underachievement, criminality and violence for some*', which is reflected in the disproportionate number of Muslim prisoners in UK prisons, with 'Muslims constitut[ing] nearly 10% of the male and female prison population, more than 3 times their representation in the wider population' (Muslim Youth Helpline, 2011). Therefore, it is important to note that anti-Muslim prejudice itself has posed the question of belonging to Muslims living in Britain, reflecting again Barth's theory (1969, In Eriksen, 2002), and has led to varying responses in how British Muslims identify themselves. These will be explored below.

### **8.1 EMPHASISING BRITISH IDENTITY**

One reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice is that some Muslims feel strongly patriotic and keen to prove that their British and Islamic identities do not conflict. For example, one Muslim survey respondent stated that some members of the Muslim community are '*exploring the concept of British Muslim identity more*' as a result of anti-Muslim prejudice. Other survey responses from Muslims also included statements suggesting a perceived need to exaggerate or prove their British identity, for example one respondent explained how anti-Muslim prejudice '*motivates me to publically express my Britishness more openly than I might otherwise do e.g., flying a union jack during football internationals*'. Another commented that '*[I] feel that I have to portray myself as a 'good' person in public, otherwise all Muslims will be*

*judged by my actions'*, suggesting that there is pressure to be an ambassador for the religion in public. This would arguably be more apparent for those who are more visibly Muslim. Others reflected on a conscious recognition and feeling of responsibility, suggesting it necessary to put non-Muslims *'at ease'* and *'reassure'* them by portraying a positive image of Muslims through their actions and trying to correct *'the distorted view they have of Islam'*. This type of reaction may lead to some Muslims seeking to emphasise their national identity rather than letting it be expressed naturally. As one respondent articulated, it can *'strengthen one's Britishness – as an act of rebellion'*. An example a group that works hard to dispel the misconceptions surrounding Islam in Britain is the Exploring Islam Foundation (2011), whose aim is *'to demonstrate that Islam is a mainstream British faith'*.

Anti-Muslim prejudice can also result in an apologetic stance for some Muslims, who are eager to distance themselves from the actions of the radical minority and prove their British national identity. For example, one respondent shared that *'I felt that I owed people an apology when I saw on the news a group of Muslims burning the poppy. It upset many British people and it upset me. My grandfather was a prisoner of war, and all my family wear a poppy, and we show respect on this day. Along came 'my brothers in faith' and start burning the flag. I felt ashamed and guilty, although I did nothing wrong.'* This is evidence of British Muslims feeling misrepresented, misunderstood and, again, wanting to reassure non-Muslims that this is not what they identify with as Muslims and reduce perceived conflict and polarisation. This is an example of Goffman's (1957, In Eriksen, 2002) theory of group membership being overcommunicated.

## **8.2 EMPHASISING MUSLIM IDENTITY**

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice is the emphasis of Muslim identity. For example, one respondent claimed that they *'somewhat enjoy debate and confrontation, so I actually grew my hair & my beard longer from the time that the EDL came into existence. I was actually looking for more people to approach me and question me about my faith'*, suggesting that reactions are influenced by individual personalities and emphasising Muslim identity can be an attempt at *'dawah'* (Islamic

evangelism). Both overcommunication and undercommunication are found to be profound in the following reactions of self-segregation and rejection of national identity, as shown below.

### **8.3 SELF SEGREGATION**

Self segregation can be another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice, supported by Hudak & Kihn (2001, p3) who state that one destructive impact of labelling can be '*to isolate us from each other*' and that '*one form of resistance is to form communities, in solidarity*'. Some Muslim survey respondents commented that anti-Muslim prejudice can result in community members feeling '*alientated*', '*marginalised*' and '*isolat[ed]*', encouraging them to become more '*insular*', '*inward looking*' and keen to '*stick to their own communities*', thus restricting interaction with non-Muslims. This again supports Barth's (1969) theory of emphasis of difference leading to social boundaries, in this case they can be geographical boundaries. The European Muslim Research Centre (2010) term this type of reaction as '*refuge and retreat*' (p20) and illustrate this with many incidents, including one where a Muslim woman '*reduced her travel by foot and by public transport to a minimum*' (p20) following an anti-Muslim prejudice inspired attack. The reduction of interaction can aid in the creation of the stereotyped 'other' – i.e., non Muslims, in the Muslims' minds and vice versa - as interaction is not available to aid active questioning of such preconceptions. Such polarised stereotypes of 'self' and 'other' and separation threatens community and national cohesion. Mr Ali (2011, interview) commented that if anti-Muslim prejudice is not curbed, it could become a self fulfilling prophecy, as explained above with a victim mentality being adopted by more members of the community, and creating more victims. Self segregation is arguably a symptom of this becoming a reality.

However, it is important to note that there are other benefits of self segregation, such as community language, halal food and prayer facilities being available etc, so anti-Muslim prejudice is one factor among many. It is also important to note that isolationist members exist in every community – as can also be seen above by non-Muslims who choose to distance themselves from minorities (as shown below).

#### 8.4 SELF CENSORSHIP

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice can involve individuals *'reducing or concealing their adherence to Islam in the hope that this will reduce the risk of attack'* (European Muslim Research Centre, 2010, p20). Self censorship can also involve Muslims trying to reduce their physical visibility in the public arena – perhaps by shaving off their beard or taking off their headscarf. One survey respondent described this as individuals *'tak[ing] off their Muslim identity so they can easily walk in the crowds and feel they belong'*. Another respondent also shared that *'I don't advertise the fact I am a Muslim and that's for several reasons but one of them is fear of prejudice'*. The European Muslim Research Centre (2010) also reported how their researcher *'walked past the building five times without realising it was a mosque because on the advice of police it had virtually been camouflaged and boarded up so as to reduce risk of further damage and attack'* (p93).

Anti-Muslim prejudice can also lead to silence from those considered mainstream British Muslims who are fearful of speaking or standing out for fear of anti-Muslim prejudice inspired reprisal. For example, they may think twice about or resist joining a pro-Palestinian group for fear of being seen as being at odds with British foreign policy and having their loyalty/British national identity being questioned as a result.

Self censorship can also lead to a lack of resources in the Muslim community, i.e., a lack of spokespeople. This can mean that the time, manpower and money needed to respond to every anti-Muslim prejudice inspired incident/media story cannot be found. While attempting to respond can provide hope to the community (Ali, 2011, interview) it can lead to a reactive response as opposed to spending time on positive, proactive work (Bari, 2011, interview). Therefore, some Muslims may purposefully choose not to comment on such incidents and instead focus their resources on other projects, allowing anti-Muslim prejudice to continue unchallenged.

Self censorship can also result in Muslims *'undercommunicating'* (Eriksen, 2002) their Muslim identity through fear of anti-Muslim prejudice, fuelling the argument that Muslim and British identities are in conflict.

## 8.5 REJECTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice can be the rejection of British national identity, for example the now-banned group Islam4UK argued that *'Muslims had no allegiance to the UK, only to God'* (BBC News, 2010). Their leader, Mr Anjem Chowdhury, also claimed that Muslims *'will dominate this country - and implement the beauty and perfection of Islam.'* (London Evening Standard, 2009). This is an aggressive, 'defensive and resentful' reaction, arguably based on anger and frustration, although other factors are arguably involved. One survey respondent commented that *'by marginalising us they make me more extreme'*. This articulates well the potential result of anti-Muslim prejudice and the need to prevent Muslims feeling that they unnecessarily have to choose between their religious and their national identities.

Mr Ali (2011, interview) commented that when such a defensive reaction occurs within sections of the Muslim community, a need is felt to focus on the things you value the most (for some Muslims this is Islam) and rejecting that which is perceived to be causing you pain (for some this can be their Britishness). However, such a reaction has a counter-productive impact by providing sensationalist examples for the media to use, further fuelling anti-Muslim prejudice.

Another extreme variation of rejecting national identity is that anti-Muslim prejudice can lead to 'reverse migration' (Bari, 2011 – interview) with talented Muslims moving to countries that are more respectful to them and two survey respondents stated that they were considering this. This obviously impacts Britain as it is losing valuable people who can contribute to the British economy and society. Dr Bari (2011, interview) explained that most Muslims are raised with a respect for the law of the land, family values etc and could be true ambassadors for Britain, with the potential of improving relationships with the Muslim world for Britain.

## 8.6 BRITAIN + MUSLIM – SELF ASCRIBED

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice is that while Muslims may be comfortable with their British national identity, they may feel that being a citizen should not mean needing to prove you belong and that criticising certain aspects of society – for example, the pub culture or Britain’s foreign policy (as highlighted above) – should not call into question their loyalty and sense of national identity.

However, it appears this is not the reality for some. Mr Ali (2011, interview), recounted how he had previously been subjected to a personal ‘*character assassination*’ by sections of the media due to his strong pro-Palestinian position and substantial personal influence among ministers and police officers. He was targeted by mainstream media outlets, such as the Daily Mail, BBC’s Panorama and Dispatchers programmes, as well as fringe coverage by the Centre of Social Cohesion. The accusations posed by such media included being part of a plan to infiltrate the Labour party in Tower Hamlets (which itself is portrayed as part of a wider plan for the Islamification of Britain/Europe) and was portrayed as a ‘*Godfather like person*’ who controls the local political scene. Mr Ali explained that such personal Islamophobic attacks attempt to intimidate and change you – to ‘*tone you down*’ - but that it had made him more resolute and sure he was doing the right thing, rather than causing him to question his British or Muslim identity. Mr Ali, while admitting that the constant struggle against anti-Muslim prejudice – both personally and as a community – can take its toll, emphasised the need for a proactive response.

Mr Ali explained that while being proactive in disproving the claims made through anti-Muslim prejudice is still a reaction to the situation, it is not a defensive reaction. Rather, it is a continuation of what Muslims have faced throughout history and something he sees as being ‘*part of the job*’ of being Muslim. This proactive approach includes correcting misrepresentation, struggling to ensure equal treatment for all and engaging with non-Muslims through interfaith work. He was clear that it is important for British Muslims to be true to themselves while standing by their Islamic principles, which include honesty and transparency. This approach

arguably draws together the myths and invented traditions from both British nationalism and Islamic history.

This reaction is evidence against the victim mentality that Muslims are supposed to have, with 49/87 survey respondents claiming they felt anti-Muslim prejudice did not impact how they expressed their own British identity. One respondent claimed that they gave non-Muslims the '*benefit of the doubt*', stating that many in the Muslim community '*do not want to reside in the mental state where they are the perennial victims in one way or another and hyper-sensitive to any comments of their community*'. Another respondent was similarly defiant, claiming '*I am not going to change my attitude or behaviour to other non-Muslims because of a few individuals who are hell bent on mischief making and causing disharmony amongst the cohesive communities who live side by side in a tolerant society*'. This type of defiant, assertive British Muslim identity is very promising for future, interfaith relationships.

This act of self-ascription of the label British Muslim involving 'self-fashioning' and is evidence that '*there is an intrinsic relationship between Islamophobia and the Making of Muslims*' (Vakil, 2011, p43).

## **9. CHANGE IN THE EXPRESSION OF BRITISH NATIONAL IDENTITY AMONG NON-MUSLIMS**

Non-Muslims also view and express their British national identity in a variety of ways in light of anti-Muslim prejudice. One possibility is that they can accept the discourse that a '*clash of civilisations*' (Huntington, 1993) exists between the West and Islam and therefore accept the labelling of Muslims as 'other' as accurate. This can lead to British identity being defined as not inclusive of Muslims, focusing on a more exclusive national identity and can negatively impact how they interact with Muslims. Non-Muslims can also distancing themselves from Muslims, identify with an extreme, exclusive, ethnically based British national identity, or experience a weakened sense of British national identity and a concern for Britain's future. Other, arguably more positive, reactions include a strengthening of their own religious identity and expression of it, and finally, it may lead them to actively defining British



national identity as inclusive in light of anti-Muslim prejudice. Each of these will be explored below.

### **9.1 DISTANCING**

One reaction of non-Muslims to anti-Muslim prejudice is that they may choose to distance themselves from Muslims, to separate themselves and resist change in a quieter way than others holding similar prejudice. This can still be divisive however, as it increases the chances of segregation, both geographically and socially. It can also lead to '*white flight*', a term only recently used regarding the context of Britain and for when a new 'othered' group settles in a locality and the existing majority choose to move away from the area as a result. This is supported by Modood (2011) who states '*Residential concentrations result more from fear of racism and "white flight" than self-ghettoisation*'.

Such distancing can also be influenced by specific unease non-Muslims may feel regarding interaction with Muslims. Three non-Muslim survey respondents mentioned that they felt uncomfortable with how Muslim women dress, stating that it made it difficult to interact with them. One respondent mentioned that '*I hate seeing women covered up in my country, because it is not what we stand for - women here have fought a long war against inequality, and it doesn't get much less equal than men not having to cover up and women having to, women not being able to go swimming with men in public, and all that rubbish. It is the men women relations in Islam that I find incompatible with a British identity.*' Such unease suggests a need for dialogue between such people, which may not remove the unease completely but may increase understanding of each party's position on the issue.

### **9.2 EXTREME NATIONALISM**

Some non-Muslims may react more proactively to anti-Muslim prejudice, some by joining organisations with it at the heart of their values and others will choose to react violently towards Muslims. Such discourses and behaviours focus on '*defending the British way of life*' from Islamic influence. For example, the BNP defines British national identity in its manifesto 2010 (BNP, 2010) as an ethnic

national identity – *‘British people may take pride from knowing that the blood of an immense column of nation-building, civilisation-creating heroes and heroines runs through their veins’* (p23) and emphasises the threat of *‘Islamification of society’* (p34), stating that *‘Islamic immigration [should] be halted and reversed as it presents one of the most deadly threats yet to the survival of our nation’* (P30). Anti-Muslim prejudice is here justified by some as being a *‘moral duty – to act against a perceived threat to the existence of the social’* (Palacios, 2009, p38). This is particularly powerful when the ‘other’ is depicted as a threat to national values and security – as is the case with anti-Muslim prejudice and the way it is viewed by supporters of groups such as the BNP and the EDL.

As illustrated by an interview conducted by Dr Chris Allen with Dave Allport and Denise Maxwell from an organisation called Rewind, far right groups such as the BNP use national symbols to attract support and emphasise their national cause. They share; *‘Although St George’s is a celebration about your patron saint, it does attract a lot of far right influence, and far right support’* (European Muslim Research Centre, 2010, p91). Similarly, a press statement on the EDL website (2011) states that *‘God Save the Queen was belted out, loudly and proudly, on more than one occasion’ and that ‘flags were flying high: St George Crosses, Scottish Saltires, Union Flags, LGBT Rainbow flags, Stars of David and many more’*. One respondent to the survey also commented that anti-Muslim prejudice is *‘narrowing the concept of Britishness to a white-only, imperialist mindset of a past that never truly existed’*, drawing on Hobsbawn’s (1969, In Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p76) ‘invented traditions’.

### **9.3 LESS NATIONALISTIC**

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice can be the weakening of non-Muslims’ own British national identity. Survey respondents spoke of racists *‘try[ing] to steal Britishness’* and feeling uneasy being patriotic as a result as *‘saying you are proud to be British is something that lots of Islamophobics like to say’*. Another similarly commented that it *‘makes acts of patriotism, such as displaying the Union Jack, look like acts of intolerance’* and another shared that they now *‘associate overt pride and symbols, such as the Union Jack, Flag of St George and England football shirts with*

*racist groups like the EDL and that such groups seem to believe they have a monopoly on Britishness*'. Such comments support the suggestion that anti-Muslim prejudice has the potential to shape the discourse surrounding British national identity where the outcome may be that some citizens may define patriotism as holding such prejudices, weakening their own personal sense of national identity and expression of it and damaging its unifying potential.

#### **9.4 CONCERN FOR BRITISH NATIONAL IDENTITY**

5/55 respondents to the survey specifically mentioned that they were concerned how anti-Muslim prejudice is impacting the image of Britain abroad, with one stating that they *'would not want other cultures and countries to think that all British people are unfriendly, unaccepting Xenophobics and racists*'. Such fear is motivation for activist groups such as Hope not Hate, who ran a campaign in 2009 in response to the election of BNP candidates to seats in European Parliament. Tens of thousands signed a petition to state *'Not in my name*', claiming that *'The BNP do not represent Britain in the European Parliament*'. (Hope Not Hate, 2009)

Other respondents also expressed that anti-Muslim prejudice is destructive to British identity and values, with one respondent stating that *'anti-Muslim prejudice goes against the British identity*'. One respondent claimed that they felt anti-Muslim prejudice like, *'any prejudice, is destructive and divisive and devalues our principles of tolerance and fairness*' and another claimed that it *'should make us ashamed – it is a far cry from Britain's supposed championing of the underdog, commitment to fair play and tolerance*'. Such comments suggest that anti-Muslim prejudice has the potential to provide a source of unity and positive definition of British national identity, as well as to divide and exclude.

#### **9.5 STRENGTHENING OTHER IDENTITIES**

Another reaction to anti-Muslim prejudice can be that it leads some non-Muslims to reflect on their own religious identity. For example, one respondent claimed that anti-Muslim prejudice *'reminds me I should attend church (more) regularly*', so it arguably has the potential to reinforce other religious identities, which is not

necessarily detrimental to social relations. However, another respondent commented that anti-Muslim prejudice is *'cementing a rather insular conception of what it means to be British among a good number of people (who might - emphasise their and the UK's 'Christian-ness' purely to differentiate themselves from Muslims),* suggesting that anti-Muslims prejudice also has the potential to be divisive and depends on the intention involved. Such overemphasis of group membership supports Goffman's (1969, In Eriksen, 2002) theory.

## **9.6 PROACTIVE, INCLUSIVE NATIONALISM**

Another reaction can be for non-Muslims to seek to understand and question the anti-Muslim prejudice inspired discourse and work with Muslims on common principles of tolerance, justice and equality for all. For example, one respondent expressed that a *'suspicion of the stereotypes has made me seek out people to hear their side'*, indicating that some non-Muslims are seeking interaction, education and understanding regarding Islam and the Muslim community as a result of anti-Muslim prejudice. While racist groups have arisen, so have groups committed to fighting anti-fascism. One of the biggest organisations today in Britain is Unite Against Fascism, who organise counter-demonstrations against groups such as the EDL and call for *'the broadest unity against the alarming rise in racism and fascism in Britain today'* (UAF, 2011b), drawing support from Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Groups such as these actively fight for a more inclusive, civic British national identity that does not see Muslims as the 'other' but as a part of British multicultural society.

In this way, anti-Muslim prejudice can *'bring out a sense of unity among anti-racists'* as one survey respondent claimed, it *'makes me more active in being more open and willing to voice my opinions on British Muslims (i.e., [they're] just as British as the next guy)'*. Another respondent explained that *'if I knew Muslims may feel vulnerable or targetted I would want to counteract that in my own behaviour'* and others felt it necessary to reassure Muslims when interacting with them. For example, one respondent stated that *'when in dialogue with Muslims which involves disagreement, I want them to be aware that no disagreement on my part is driven by a personal dislike or hatred'*. This type of reaction, again while arguably positive and peaceful, is

still a reaction and demonstrates a high level of awareness among some non-Muslims about the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice. This again highlights that anti-Muslim prejudice has the potential to provide a source of unity and positive, inclusive definition of British national identity.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

The main conclusions from this study have been that there are varying responses to the rise and increasingly mainstream manifestations of anti-Muslim prejudice in contemporary Britain. The responses by Muslim survey respondents have illustrated that anti-Muslim prejudice is a real, lived experience for many Muslims in Britain. The responses to anti-Muslim prejudice have been both positive and negative, both promising and potentially damaging for the future of Britain and the definition of British national identity. British national identity as an evolving concept, means different things to different people – varying from the more perennialist, exclusive and ethnically based approach to a more inclusive, civic identity based on history or the product of modernisation.

It is clear from the survey responses and interviews that being a British Muslim today is an ongoing challenge and that anti-Muslim prejudice is one of the main recognised factors in this struggle. As Barth's (1969, In Eriksen, 2002) theory relating to social boundaries suggests, the emphasis of religious difference between Muslims and non-Muslims through anti-Muslim prejudice can be the very thing that creates and strengthens such barriers to a cohesive society.

It was also clear from the survey responses that Goffman's (1959, In Eriksen, 2002) theory of overcommunication and undercommunication of group membership can be seen in the reactions to anti-Muslim prejudice from both Muslims and non-Muslims. It has been shown that anti-Muslim prejudice can lead Muslims to emphasise either their British or Muslim identity but there is a positive, promising example in those who self ascribe as British Muslims as a result. This emphasis of drawing together both identities for strength and meaning is a positive reaction, allowing both identities to coexist peacefully, rejecting the victim mentality and

identity crisis Muslims are often accused of possessing. Sayyid (2011) argues that anti-Muslim prejudice 'emerges in contexts where being Muslim has a significance which is political – [and that] It is possible to argue that Muslims in the UK are far more powerful than other Muslim communities in the Western plutocracies' (p17), which is promising as it suggests the number of Muslims reacting to anti-Muslim prejudice with self ascription is strong.

Non-Muslim reactions were also seen to overcommunicate or undercommunicate their group identities in reacting to anti-Muslim prejudice. Examples of extreme nationalism and a concern for or weakening of British national identity were also found in varying degrees. However, the most positive and peaceful reaction was a commitment to a proactive, inclusive British nationalism, which offers to unite Muslims and non-Muslims against outbreaks of fascism, regardless of the form it takes.

The different approaches to nationalism – as outlined in the theory chapter – also offer different insights into the reasons behind anti-Muslim prejudice and can be the basis for future recommendations for those in authority and at the grass roots level to consider.

The Perennialist approach illustrates the damage of holding such divisive opinions in a multicultural, multi-faith society and suggests that in order for a cohesive future to be found, such concerns and opinions need to be challenged and reassurance provided by focusing on the similarities between Islam and British values and demonstrating the lack of conflict between them. Unfortunately, those Muslims that react to anti-Muslim prejudice by rejecting their national identity help encourage such opinions, suggesting that both communities contribute to the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice.

The Ethnosymbolist approach suggests the responsibility of those in positions to create 'myths' about British national identity and the opportunity for such myths to reflect a more inclusive history. It is telling that the survey responses suggest that

non-Muslims are more likely to see Britain as principled against intolerance of difference, reflecting a national myth that Muslims cannot relate to due to personal experience of prejudice. While the discussion surrounding the definition of British national identity has been active in recent years, it is important now to explore and discuss what Britain's 'shared values' are with cultural leaders and their grass roots connections playing an active role. Such shared values could draw upon the potential that the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice offers contemporary Britain as something to define itself in opposition to. National myths that demonstrate a more inclusive history, emphasising Britain's history of fighting racism and the national benefits gained as a result of colonialism and contemporary multiculturalism could help encourage a more inclusive British national identity.

Modernists could argue that anti-Muslim prejudice is a modern phenomenon based on the current social-economic and political climate. As Esposito and Kalin (2011, pxxii) state, anti-Muslim prejudice's 'contemporary resurgence has been triggered by the significant influx of Muslims in the West in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Iranian revolution, hijackings, hostage-taking and acts of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, attacks against the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe'. As Eriksen (2002) explains that people grow 'strongly self-conscious of their ethnic identity under these circumstances of extensive contact with others [and] developed standardised ways of behaving vis-a-vis each other'. This paper argues that such behaviours are still being negotiated in Britain today between Muslims and non-Muslims, where recent events have highlighted this difference in identity.

The Modernist approach also highlights the role of politicians and the media in reinforcing national identity. Policies need to reflect the shared values of British citizens as a whole without questioning the loyalty of Muslims to the nation in order to encourage national cohesion. It is clear from the survey responses and also the Gallup 2011 report that Muslims are often the most patriotic citizens, but it is their countries that are unaccepting of their presence.

In the same way, traditions have been 'invented' in the past based on the resources available with a political narrative. What is arguably necessary now is for politicians to reject their seemingly 'lacklustre response' (MCB, 2010) to anti-Muslim prejudice and provide an inclusive narrative, true to Britain's multicultural, multi-faith history, to actively refute anti-Muslim prejudice, offer protection to all citizens and help build a society that allows everyone to express the 'self' and be included, understood and accepted. Cesari (2011 in Esposito and Kalin, 2011, pxxvii) claims that 'current European multicultural policies are in fact not promoting pluralism and equality and should be re-worked to include minority (Islamic) cultural values'. By living together in a multi-faith, multicultural environment with mutual understanding and respect we are able to fulfill 'the desire of the desire of the other' (Kojève, 1969, In Palacios, 2009, p35), while still living positively side by side and working for the common good.

This paper therefore suggests that anti-Muslim prejudice provides the potential to strengthen and unify British national identity, defining it as more inclusive, tolerant and anti-prejudice. However, it also demonstrates the potential for British national identity to be increasingly defined as exclusive of its Muslim citizens, leading to further division and both Muslims and non-Muslims identifying less with their British national identity. It is important that such positions and intentions are clarified urgently. As Allen (2010, p60) states 'If – Islamophobia and all its potential impacts, consequences and ramifications are not afforded the necessary and rightful importance now, then it is possible that this will continue to bring about deeper divisions, less cohesion, greater tensions and increased social unrest in Britain'.



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## APPENDIX 1 - SURVEY QUESTIONS – MUSLIM FOCUS GROUP

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey.

I am currently completing my masters in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict at Birkbeck University, London. This survey will form part of my primary data for my dissertation which is looking at the impact of anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK.

The survey consists of four sections;

1. Demographic data
2. National Identity
3. Anti-Muslim prejudice
4. The impact of anti-Muslim prejudice

There are only ten questions and the survey should take no longer than 15 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your input at any time without needing to provide a reason.

Please note that your answers will remain confidential unless explicitly stated by yourself. The collated responses will be submitted as part of my dissertation to Birkbeck University, London and the research may be circulated to others in the field in future.

In order to progress through each page, please use the following navigation buttons;

- Click the 'Next' button to move to the next page
- Click the 'Previous' button to return to the previous page
- Click 'Exit the Survey' button to leave the survey
- Click the 'Submit' button to submit your responses.

If you have any questions please contact me at [laura.j.stout@gmail.com](mailto:laura.j.stout@gmail.com). Please note that the deadline is the 20th of July 2011.

Your assistance with this survey is much appreciated

- A. This section will ask a series of short questions to allow the rest of the results to be analysed further. Please provide your;
  - a. National identity -
  - b. Religion -
    - i. Were you born into the faith / are you a convert?



- ii. Is your religion visibly obvious to others from what you wear etc?
  - c. How long have you lived in the UK?
  - d. Ethnicity –
  - e. Age -
  - f. Location (city) -
- B. This section will address the question of national identity
- a. What does being British mean to you?
  - b. What does multiculturalism mean to you and do you think it is successful / failing in Britain today?
  - c. Do you feel that your religious and national identities conflict, complement or do not impact each other? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
  - d. Do you experience any challenges as a direct result of being a British Muslim? If so, please provide examples.
- C. This section will look questions relating to anti-Muslim prejudice
- a. What does anti-Muslim prejudice mean to you and who / what do you think is to blame for it?
  - b. Do you think anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is rising? Why do you think this is? What evidence is there for your answer?
  - c. Have you or anyone you know experienced anti-Muslim prejudice? If so, please provide an example/s.
- D. This section will look at the impact of anti-Muslim prejudice
- a. Do you think that anti-Muslim prejudice is impacting British Muslims' sense of identity? If so, how?
  - b. Does anti-Muslim prejudice impact how you personally express your own British identity? How? Please give examples.
  - c. How does anti-Muslim prejudice impact your behaviour / interaction with non-Muslims? Please give examples.

## APPENDIX 2 - SURVEY QUESTIONS – NON-MUSLIM FOCUS GROUP

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey.

I am currently completing my masters in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict at Birkbeck University, London. This survey will form part of my primary data for my dissertation which is looking at the impact of anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK.

The survey consists of four sections;

5. Demographic data
6. National Identity
7. Anti-Muslim prejudice
8. The impact of anti-Muslim prejudice

There are only ten questions and the survey should take no longer than 15 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your input at any time without needing to provide a reason.

Please note that your answers will remain confidential unless explicitly stated by yourself. The collated responses will be submitted as part of my dissertation to Birkbeck University, London and the research may be circulated to others in the field in future.

In order to progress through each page, please use the following navigation buttons;

- Click the 'Next' button to move to the next page
- Click the 'Previous' button to return to the previous page
- Click 'Exit the Survey Early' button to leave the survey
- Click the 'Submit' button to submit your responses.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [laura.j.stout@gmail.com](mailto:laura.j.stout@gmail.com). Please note that the deadline for submission is the 20th of July 2011.

Your assistance with this survey is much appreciated.

- E. This section will ask a series of short questions to allow the rest of the results to be analysed further. Please provide your;
  - a. National identity -
  - b. Religion
  - c. How long have you lived in the UK?

- d. Ethnicity –
  - e. Age -
  - f. Location (city) -
- F. This section will address the question of national identity
- a. What does being British mean to you?
  - b. What does multiculturalism mean to you and do you think it is successful / failing in Britain today?
  - c. Do you feel that Islam conflicts, complements or does not impact Muslims' sense of British identity? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
- G. This section will look questions relating to anti-Muslim prejudice
- a. What does anti-Muslim prejudice mean to you and who / what do you think is to blame for it?
  - b. Do you think anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is rising? Why do you think this is? What evidence is there for your answer?
- H. This section will look at the impact of anti-Muslim prejudice
- a. Do you think that anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK is impacting what it means to be British? If so, how?
  - b. Does the existence of anti-Muslim prejudice impact how you express your own British identity? How? Please give examples.
  - c. How does anti-Muslim prejudice impact your behaviour / interaction with Muslims? Please give examples.
  - d. Do you feel that your freedom of speech is compromised by fears of being accused of anti-Muslim prejudice? If so, please give an example.