

The London School of Economics and Political Science

***Being white, British and Muslim:  
Exploring the identity recognition, negotiation and performance of  
seemingly incompatible identities***

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science of the  
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## **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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## Abstract

In focusing on white British Muslims, this thesis explores how their multiple, seemingly incompatible identities shape their experiences of belonging, particularly in relation to how they are seen by others. The thesis examines this through three empirical studies. The first looks at the social representations of white British Muslims within British mainstream and British Muslim newspapers and explores how representations of threat are discursively constructed, perpetuated and challenged. The second paper examines how white British Muslims perceive their identities to be recognised by relevant others. It notes how their identities interact and intersect, influencing which identities are acknowledged while others are erased. It shows that as a result, white British Muslims draw on performative strategies to regain a sense of control over their perceived (mis/non)recognition. Finally, the third paper looks at actual identity recognition by relevant others (white British non-Muslims and non-white British Muslims) and considers the role that religious markers and signifiers play in these dynamics and on intentions for social interaction. It also investigates recognition after the revelation of their multiple, seemingly incompatible identities and what this means for intergroup distinctiveness.

Drawing the findings together, the thesis makes three key contributions.

Empirically, this thesis makes a novel empirical contribution to social psychological research by focusing on white British Muslims. Theoretically it, 1) emphasises that identities are contextual, interactional and intersectional, and that they need to be recognised as such in order to better understand identity-related processes in an increasingly complex world, and 2) demonstrates the significance of incorporating recognition and identity performance into the theorisation of identities. In doing so, it emphasises the central role others play in processes of identification and sheds light on

the social productions of, and challenges to, group boundaries along the lines of sameness and difference.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Inspiration for the research

The impetus for this thesis began after my mother came home from work one day. She was a supply teacher at the time and had spent the day in an inner-city London school where at lunchtime there had been an exchange between herself and another teacher. My mother is of Polish heritage, has lived in Britain since she was 10 months old, is British by nationality and Muslim by faith. She is a white (Polish) British Muslim. At lunchtime she had realised that one of the teachers in the staffroom was also of Polish heritage. However, rather than sharing her Polishness with that teacher, my mother instead mentioned it to the teaching assistant, a British Turkish woman. The teaching assistant found my mother's identity fascinating, and later informed the Polish teacher, who, in contrast to the teaching assistant's reaction, seemed to question the authenticity of my mother's claim. *How could she be Polish? There were no Polish Muslims. She was definitely sure there were no Polish Muslims. It's a Catholic country.* The teacher was adamant that my mother could not be 'authentically' Polish due to her religion, which was clearly indicated by the *hijab* (headscarf) she wears. The teacher could not see beyond the marker of my mother's Muslimness and the racialised assumptions about Islam being a foreign non-European religion, and, as a result, denied my mother recognition of her heritage. On reflection, what is more interesting was that there was strategy to my mother's thinking and actions. She had clearly thought about who would be easiest to tell, and perhaps most accepting, of this information about her identity.

My mother had never shared any experiences like this previously, and I myself had rarely thought much about her experiences of her identity. This incident, however, sparked some questions. How are people with identities that could be termed 'unusual'

and regarded as ‘incompatible’ be seen by different relevant others? Are their identities recognised and acknowledged or rejected and denied and what role do salient markers and racialised assumptions play in this? How do these individuals negotiate and manage their identities through performative strategies as a result? And what are the consequences of these experiences on feelings of belonging? These questions began developing my thoughts for a PhD thesis, and while I have strayed ever so slightly from my initial inspiration – by focusing on white British Muslims of English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish heritage, rather than ‘white’ as a more general ethnic category – these questions in relation to processes of identity recognition, negotiation and performance among people within contexts that, at times, may see their identities as incompatible, have continued to guide my research throughout the PhD journey. In doing so, the thesis speaks more broadly to centring how others play a significant role in our experiences of our multiple identities and highlights the importance of studying and acknowledging identities as intersecting, interacting and increasingly complex. In addition, it illustrates how the boundaries through which identities are understood can influence how they are seen and experienced with significant repercussions on feelings of social inclusion and exclusion.

## **1.2 Who are white British Muslims?**

### **1.2.1 White British Muslims in numbers**

According to the latest figures from the 2011 census records, Muslims in Britain make up 4.4% of the population (Elshayyal, 2015). They are a highly ethnically diverse group, made of people of South Asian, Black, Arab, White and Mixed heritage, as well as many others (Office for National Statistics, 2011). White British Muslims constitute

just 3% of the Muslim population in England and Wales and 3.5% of Muslims in Scotland (Elshayyal, 2015; Office for National Statistics, 2011). These are individuals who had declared their ethnic group as ‘White British’ (or ‘White Scottish’ on the Scottish census) and marked their religion as ‘Muslim’. An exploration into who these ‘White British’ Muslims are suggests that the majority could be people of white English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish heritage, as those who are not tend to choose the category ‘Other White’ (Gardener & Connolly, 2005). However, a more recent examination reveals that based on data on the parents of these individuals only 53.5% had parents who were both ‘White British’, 58.3% had at least one parent who was ‘White British’ and, surprisingly, 33.7% had parents who were both ‘Asian’ (Brice, 2017). What appears to be the case is that many of those whose parents were ‘Asian’ were born and brought up in the UK (second or third generation British) and thus claimed a ‘White’ identity (Brice, 2017). With this in mind, we must be cautious of making claims about the number of Muslims of white English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish heritage based on this data, and while it raises some interesting questions about the deconstruction of boundaries of identity categories and the binaries of ‘West vs Islam’ and ‘White vs Muslim’ (Brice, 2017), these questions are not the focus of this thesis and therefore are not explored here.

For the sake of ease, in this thesis when the term ‘white British Muslim’ is used, it refers to Muslims of white English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish heritage. Many of these are Muslim through conversion, and although no official record exists and the census of England and Wales does not record religion at birth as the Scottish census does, in 2011 a systematically calculated estimate of the number of converts, regardless of ethnicity, placed it at between 90,000 to 100,000, with around 5,000 conversions

taking place each year (Brice, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Yet, in addition to conversions, some white British Muslims are undoubtedly ‘born into’ the religion as a result of being descendants of converts, for as we see in the next section, there is a long history of conversion to Islam in the UK.

### **1.2.2 From past to present: a brief overview of white Muslims in Britain**

The first recorded English convert to Islam was John Nelson, a servant on an English ship travelling to Tripoli, Libya in the 1580s (Matar, 1998). In fact, during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century conversion to Islam was a significant enough phenomenon for the Spanish word *renegado* ('renegade' – meaning to convert from Christianity to Islam) to enter the Oxford English Dictionary in 1583 (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Several decades later the first ever translation of the Qur'an<sup>2</sup> by Alexander Ross, was published in 1649. In the introduction, Ross emphasises that his translation was “for the satisfaction of those that desire to look into the *Turkish* vanities”, indicating the clear interest (even if negative) in Islam at the time, given the on-going Ottoman wars in Europe.

Later, during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, sailors from the Indian subcontinent working for the British East India Company and Yemenis working in the British merchant navy began settling in port cities and marrying local English and Welsh women some of whom embraced Islam (Seddon, 2013). By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were a number of converts among the middle and upper classes, such as Henry Stanley who embraced the religion in 1859 and became the first Muslim member of the House of Lords (Gilham, 2014). Two other influential English converts to Islam

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<sup>1</sup> Importantly, these figures are not specific to those of white ethnicity and do not account for possible deconversions (Brice, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Although this was translated from the French version, translated by André Du Ryer in 1647 (Thomas et al., 2014).

were William Henry Abdullah Quilliam (1856-1932), the first Englishman to actively propagate Islam in Britain by seeking and encouraging conversion among other Englishmen and women, and Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), who was the first Muslim to translate the Quran from Arabic into English.

Quilliam converted in 1882 but did not publicly announce his conversion until 1887, the year in which he founded England's first recorded mosque and Islamic centre, the Liverpool Muslim Institute (LMI). It was the first known Muslim missionary organisation in Britain and Quilliam actively sought to establish a very "British" Islam, tailoring his missionary work to the customs and lives of those he hoped to convert. Gatherings at the mosque were mixed, women were not expected to cover when entering, services took place on Sundays to mirror the existing religious practices and customs to which the public were accustomed, and 'Muslim hymns' were either composed or Christian hymns suitably adopted in order to reflect Islamic teachings (Gilham, 2014). He also recited the call to prayer in English from the balcony of the LMI, much to the locals' disapproval (Hewer, 2006).

Despite Quilliam's attempts at creating a British Islam, during the lifetimes of Stanley, Quilliam and Pickthall, being Muslim was largely associated with the Ottoman Empire and should be understood within the wider context of British imperialism and the subsequent defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Indeed, to be both Muslim and loyal to Britain was seen as impossible and fundamentally at odds with one another both politically and inherently (Gilham, 2014). British converts to Islam came to be seen as traitors to their race and country and as having abandoned their identities as British – then seen as, at its core, Christian in its values and practices (Gilham, 2014). In his book, *Loyal Enemies*, Jamie Gilham cites Henry Stanley's aunt commenting on him displaying the behaviours of a "Turk" (p.26). In saying this, she reflects the way in

which Islam had become racialised<sup>3</sup> and as a result denied him his Britishness. Stanley was not alone in being depicted in this way. Quilliam, Pickthall and many others were also perceived as ‘alien’ and irrational in their adoption of Islam. In a feature for *The Islamic Review* in 1933, a female convert, Rahima Griffiths, relayed the view a colleague held of Islam as: “... a religion made for men, by a man, and for coloured men only” (Griffiths, 1933). Thus, not only was Islam viewed as undesirable and as completely separate to Britishness and indeed whiteness, it was also seen to be a religion that was oppressive towards women.

In the aftermath of World War Two and the breakup of the British Empire people from what were now known as Commonwealth countries began to arrive to the UK as students or economic migrants, and subsequently settled and established communities across Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). A significant proportion of these new migrants were from South Asia, which included Muslims from the newly established country of Pakistan. In the following decades there was a shift from associating Islam with the Ottoman Empire and Turks to Pakistanis and Pakistan. In turn, there was a change in the terminology used to describe converts and their conversion. In his research, Köse (1996, 2007) notes the way in which British converts were seen as having undone their Britishness as a result of converting to Islam and instead become “Pakistanised”. This shows how processes of racialisation and the conflation of categories with certain groups are context and time specific, reflecting the dominant ethnic association with the religion and its followers. For example, in Germany, Islam is

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<sup>3</sup> Racialisation is a sociological term seldom used in psychology (some exceptions include (Kessi, 2013; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2005; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). It refers to the attribution of racial (and ethnic and/or cultural) meaning to individuals, categories, or issues that were previously not understood through this prism (Murji & Solomos, 2005). Thus, in racialising a religion for example, it refers to the association of particular phenotypical, cultural and behavioural descriptors to a category (and the people who identify with it) that should be understood purely through its principles and system of belief (Nasar Meer, 2013; Nasar Meer & Modood, 2011; Selod & Embrick, 2013).

often conflated with being Turkish (Özyürek, 2015), in France with the Maghreb and in the US with being Arab (Galonnier, 2015).

Recent studies have shown how being Muslim continues to be seen as standing in direct opposition to Britishness, with Islam being portrayed as a religion that is foreign and Other, made up of and for ‘brown bodies’ (Galonnier, 2015; Nasar Meer, 2013; Nasar Meer & Modood, 2011; Phillips, 2006). Moreover, Islam continues to be seen as a threat, both to national and international security and to Western culture. As Moore, Mason, & Lewis (2008) note, 36% of news stories about British Muslims in British newspapers between 2000 and 2008 were about terrorism and 22% were about religious and cultural differences between Islam and British culture or the West more generally. Converts were referred to in 5% of the articles, but specific details such as the ethnicity of converts and the nature of the articles in which they appear were not recorded. In order to address the latter issue, Brice (2011) conducted a study on British newspaper reporting of converts between September 2001 and August 2010. He found that while 36% of the articles linked Muslims to terrorism, this percentage went up to 63% when considering articles about Muslim converts specifically, thus demonstrating the perception that converts to Islam are seen as a disproportionately higher threat. However, here again the specific ethnicity of the converts was not noted.

In contrast with predominately negative narratives about Muslims and conversion to Islam, in July 2019, the long-running British soap, EastEnders, revealed they were working with the Muslim Youth Helpline on a storyline where one of the characters, Bobby Beale, converts to Islam in a bid to “challenge preconceptions and prejudices about the role of faith in young people’s lives” (Hughes, 2019). While this comes as an interesting move and seen by many as a welcomed attempt to counter dominant negative narratives, its influence and impact remains to be seen.

As noted above, discourses on Islam and being Muslim continue to be almost always associated with notions of being the ‘other’, a threat to security and culture, incompatible with Western or European values and far removed from what it means to be British, and even more so being white (Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Franks, 2000; Law, Sayyid, & Sian, 2013; Moore et al., 2008; Moosavi, 2015a; Özyürek, 2015; D. Phillips, 2006; Poole, 2011; Razack, 2008). Indeed, a report by Hope Not Hate found that nearly 35% of people polled believed Islam was a threat to British way of life (Perraudin, 2019).

Thus, within a context which has long established such negative narratives and opinions about Muslims and Islam, white British Muslims are an interesting group through which to explore experiences of identity, particularly in relation to the demarcation of group boundaries along the lines of inclusion and exclusion, and acceptance and rejection. Their identity positioning as both white and Muslim bring up interesting questions about the extent to which they are seen as belonging or not belonging to their various identity groups, and how they negotiate their identities as a result.

### **1.3 The research focus**

Being both members of a contextually dominant ingroup (by being white British) and a minoritised outgroup (by being Muslim) within a socio-political context that sees their identity membership as contradictory and ontologically separate, white British Muslims make for a particularly interesting group to focus on and to explore identity-related processes and experiences. In being white and Muslims, these individuals can be categorised into a stigmatised and discriminated group and seen as traitors to their ethnic and national identity (Franks, 2000). For those who have converted to Islam,

having adopted a religious identity that is intrinsically un-white and un-British causes them to often no longer be seen as “White enough” or become ‘re-racialised’ and seen as “non-White” ((Moosavi, 2015a, p.3-4). What is more, Zebiri (2008) notes how they may also be seen as unauthentic or ‘second-class’ Muslims by heritage Muslims, and therefore may experience a sense of ‘double marginality’.

Of the existing research that has been conducted on white British Muslims (some of which has been discussed above), the majority can be found to be theoretically framed within sociological and psychological theories of conversion (Al-Qwidi, 2002; Köse, 2007, 1996; Zebiri, 2008) or in drawing on theorisations of whiteness and Islamophobia (Franks, 2000; Moosavi, 2015b, 2015a). Other research, for example by Suleiman (2013, 2016), sought to understand and record the experiences of Muslims converts (including white converts) and their reasons for conversion by drawing on this existing work. While this literature is useful in that it accounts for white Muslim experiences, this thesis aims to take a new theoretical perspective which shifts the focus away from conversion specifically, and instead considers how a social psychological approach can enrich our understanding of the processes and mechanisms that shape the experiences of people with multiple and complex ‘incompatible’ identities. In particular, this thesis focuses on the roles that others, particularly relevant others, play in these dynamics. Moreover, by considering the individual within their social context, the research in this thesis also examines the agentic strategies drawn upon by white British Muslims as they negotiate their multifaceted identities and how this in turn shapes how they are seen, or not seen, by others. To achieve these aims, the thesis is centred around the following research questions:

*How do people with multiple, and at times seemingly contradicting and incompatible identities experience their identities across various contexts with different relevant*

*others? And what are the consequences in relation to recognition and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion?*

As will be seen in the next chapter, social psychological literature and theory (namely the Social Identity Approach; Haslam 2004; Reicher, Spears, and Haslam 2010) on identity as well as intra- and intergroup relations are drawn upon to help us better understand not only the *doing* of identity but also the consequences this has on feelings of belonging and maintaining and challenging boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The thesis emphasises the importance of incorporating how identity recognition (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and strategies of identity performance (Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007) play a central part in this, emphasising the focus on the role of others in identity experiences and proposes a framework through which to examine identities that take these into account. It notes the interactional and intersectional nature of identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), acknowledging the importance of studying identities in conjunction with one another as well as in relation to the contexts in which they are experienced. In acknowledging the role of context, one must also note how power dynamics are interwoven within it, and in turn how they shape and influence processes of identification, recognition, and negotiation.

## **1.4 Thesis outline**

This thesis starts with an in-depth examination of the theorisation of identity within social psychology, incorporating the role that processes of recognition and performance can play in understanding identity dynamics further (Chapter Two). This chapter provides the literature review of the thesis. It then moves on to provide an explanation of the methodological design of each of the three studies (Chapter Three) before moving

on to the three empirical papers: the first looks at the social representations of white British Muslims in British national and British Muslim newspapers (Chapter Four<sup>4</sup>); the second examines white British Muslims experiences of identity recognition and how they negotiate and perform their identities as a result (Chapter Five<sup>5</sup>); and the last paper explores the role of identity markers and signifiers on how white British Muslim identities are actually recognised by others and the consequences on behavioural intention towards them (Chapter Six<sup>6</sup>). The thesis ends with a general discussion, drawing on the findings of all the empirical papers and existing literature to discuss both the theoretical and empirical contributions of the research. In proposing a framework to exploring multiple, seemingly oppositional identities and processes of identification, it illustrates the importance of acknowledging identities as interactional, intersectional and contextual and examining them in this way. It highlights how the concept of identity recognition is central to our experiences of our identities and how this enables for a re-emphasis on the significant role that others play in these dynamics. Lastly, in empirically focusing on white British Muslims, this thesis makes a novel contribution to the literature within social psychology on British Muslims and other groups with multiple and complex identities (Chapter Seven).

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<sup>5</sup> Published as a single-authored journal article. Amer, A. (2020). Between recognition and mis/nonrecognition: Strategies of negotiating and performing identities among white Muslims in the United Kingdom. *Political Psychology*, 41(3), pp. 533-548.

<sup>6</sup> In-preparation as a co-authored journal article. Amer, A., Halabi, S., & Gleibs, I. (in preparation). Being white and Muslim: identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by their respective ingroups.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Our identities are essential to our functioning as social beings, shaping how we make sense of ourselves and others across different contexts (Tajfel, 1978). They are multifaceted and multidimensional yet within social psychology they have been more often than not treated as discrete categories or studied in isolation (Jones & Hynie, 2017). While there are some exceptions to this (for examples see Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafiy, 2011; Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2015; Héliot, Gleibs, Coyle, Rousseau, & Rojon, 2019; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Jones & Hynie, 2017; Verkuyten, 2006), as social psychologists engaging in identity research there must be a greater emphasis and value given to theoretical and empirical approaches that reflect and acknowledge the nuances and complexities of identities and experiences of identification. Just as intrinsic is ensuring that identities are examined collectively, in conjunction with one another, and in relation to our ever-diverse social world.

In this chapter, key theories and concepts that are relevant to understanding the study of multiple and complex identities are discussed and examined in detail. It begins by outlining the main theoretical model within which this PhD is situated, that is the Social Identity Approach (SIA; Haslam, 2004; Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010) (section 2.1). It then discusses the relevance of the principles within the two theories that make up SIA – Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) – and explores these in relation to understanding multiple identities as complex, intersecting and interacting across contexts. Central to this is how constructed knowledge about the meaning of identity categories and their boundaries can shape the way in which multiple identities are experienced and understood in relation to one another. For a deeper theoretical grounding of this the thesis draws on Social Representations Theory (SRT;

Moscovici, 1972, 1988) (section 2.2). In doing so, it highlights how social knowledge about identity groups and their compatibility or ‘fit’ with each other is constructed, shared and challenged through communicative acts e.g. discourses, and how contextual power asymmetries play a particularly significant role in these dynamics. Finally, the chapter turns its focus to how the under-researched concept of identity recognition (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) can contribute invaluable in developing our understanding of how multiple, seemingly incompatible identities are not only seen by relevant others, but also experienced, managed and negotiated in relation to each other (section 2.3). Identity recognition situates the ‘other’ at the centre of these dynamics and highlights that how we are seen by others, or even how we think we are seen, shapes our experiences of acceptance and belonging. To unravel these notions further, the concept of identity performance (Klein et al., 2007) is introduced and unpacked to show how the enactment or suppression of identity can be used as a negotiating strategy to assert or indeed hide parts of our multiple and, at times, seemingly contradictory, identities. In drawing on these related but separate theories and concepts, the thesis brings them together by proposing a theoretical framework that allows for a more nuanced approach to understanding identity multiplicity (section 2.4). It allows for the examination of how processes of complex multiple identification play out in context placing the role of others within these dynamics at the centre.

## **2.1 Theorising identity: Social Identity Approach**

The Social Identity Approach (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010), sometimes referred to as the social identity perspective, is the combination of two major theories of identity within social psychology; the Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987). The former is primarily a theory

exploring intergroup conflict and the establishment of hierarchical systems, while the latter takes a more generalised approach to understanding identity and group behaviour focusing more on the cognitive processes at work. These two theories share many theoretical assumptions, in that people see themselves and others in relation to their group membership rather than as individuals. However, there are also differences, for SIT is fundamentally a theory that focuses on intergroup relations, looking at processes of comparison and distinctiveness of the ingroup in relation to other groups, while SCT is more of an intragroup theory looking at how, through cognitive processes, people come to see themselves and others as a part of a group. To understand the theoretical underpinnings of SIA further, both SIT and SCT are discussed in detail below, highlighting their key principles, similarities and differences.

### **2.1.1 Social Identity Theory**

Social identity, as Tajfel (1978, p.63) defines it, is the “part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [*sic*] knowledge of his [*sic*] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. These social groups are made up of individuals who see themselves as a part of the same social category and have some emotive connection to the shared definition and evaluation of the group. Central to SIT’s claims is that the self should be understood in relation to others. Thus, others, particularly relevant others that can bear some influence on an individual or group’s well-being, are crucial to understanding processes of identification. We orientate and understand ourselves (who we are) in relation to how we see others (who they are) and use them as points of comparison, to achieve a positive sense of distinctiveness.

The theory has three basic assumptions; 1) that individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem, attaining a positive self-concept and thus a positive social

identity; 2) that a positive social identity is based on the establishment of positive differentiation or distinctiveness between one's ingroup and relevant outgroups; and 3) if a positive identity cannot be achieved, various identity management strategies (individual mobility, social competition and social creativity) are employed in an attempt to achieve a positive sense of self and alleviate experiences of threat to intergroup distinctiveness.

The utilisation of identity management strategies set out by SIT is dependent on whether the identity group in question is permeable and/or allows for possibilities for change (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). If, for example, an identity group is permeable, individuals may try to employ 'individual mobility' by either leaving the group through disidentification and joining another (or at the very least, trying to 'pass' as a member of a non-stigmatised group (Branscombe, Fernandez, Gómez, & Cronin, 2011). Howarth (2002) demonstrates this with research on young people living in Brixton, south London, where she found that some participants actively disassociated themselves from the area because of the negative reputation it had and instead chose to identify themselves as from surrounding boroughs. In contrast, if the group is not permeable, groups may draw on social competition to seek positive distinctiveness and challenge threats to the value of their ingroup through strategies such as ingroup favouritism or outgroup derogation. For example, in their work on organisational mergers, Gleibs, Noack and Mummendey (2010) note how it can lead to experiences of threat to one's organisational identity leading to individuals being more favourable of their own group in comparison to the outgroup. Indeed, who we are is partly defined by who we believe we are not, thus, we become motivated to ensure intergroup differences and distinctiveness is maintained (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Another strategy that can be employed is social creativity whereby individuals attempt to either change the dimensions by which comparisons between one's group and others are made

or by turning a stigmatised identity into one that is positive. An example of this can be seen in a study by Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) on British Muslim women and their choices regarding religious visibility. Their study shows that wearing the hijab<sup>7</sup> made them particularly vulnerable to the often negative representations of Islam (see Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Meer, Dwyer, & Modood, 2010; Moore, Mason, & Lewis, 2008; Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, & Howarth, 2012). Yet despite this, some British Muslim women chose to wear the hijab in active opposition to these negative depictions, describing how it encouraged them to be “ambassadors of Islam”, breaking down the negative stereotypes people held through even small acts such as smiling to non-Muslims which resulted in positive identity-affirming experiences (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013, p. 444).

These strategies of attaining a positive social identity are significant in that they shed light on the ways in which we *do* our identities in relation to others and how identities are managed in context through group comparisons. Indeed, Tajfel and Turner stressed that processes of identification are embedded within the social and political context in which they play out. Thus, an attempt to understand these processes and how they relate to how identities are managed while overlooking the role of context would be to ignore a key part of what shapes them (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). What SIT does not do however is provide detail on *how* we see ourselves and others as members of groups to begin with. For this, Turner et al. (1987) developed the Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) which we turn to next.

### 2.1.2 Self-Categorisation Theory

SCT focuses on understanding the cognition behind self-categorisation and the consequences of it. The theory provides important insights into the cognitive

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<sup>7</sup> Religious headscarf worn by some Muslim women.

underpinnings of identification, namely, how we come to see ourselves, and others, as part of social groups. The key process through which this occurs is depersonalisation – a process of self-stereotyping where individuals come to see themselves according to the values, norms and behaviours of an ingroup, thereby seeing themselves as more similar to other members of the group (Turner et al., 1987). In this way, this is similar to SIT's notion of social identity; as people define themselves as part of a group there is a shift towards seeing themselves as members of a group (rather than as individuals) *through* their social identities and as being more prototypical of them.

There are three equally important levels of abstraction of self-categorisation, each social at their core and embedded within self-other relations (Reicher, Haslam, Spears, & Reynolds, 2012). These levels are; 1) personal self-categorisation, where one's personal identity is different to other members of the ingroup; 2) social self-categorisation, where social identities are different to those of outgroups; and 3) human self-categorisation, which is at the human level in comparison to other living species. These levels of identification, and indeed the categorisations themselves, are unlikely to be simultaneously drawn upon. Rather, what gives rise to these categorisations is the salience of a category in context, that is, when an identity becomes important or relevant.

According to SCT, identity salience is shaped by the interaction between two dimensions: the 'fit' of a category and its accessibility (Oakes, 1987), with one identity eventually "ris[ing] to the top" (Ramarajan, 2014, p. 595). Fit, constitutes two elements, comparative and normative. On the one hand, comparative fit describes whether the category makes sense within understandings of the similarities and differences of groups. It draws on the notion of meta-contrasts (similar to how distinctiveness operates within SIT), whereby category salience comes about through emphasis on increased

intra-group similarity and increased intergroup differentiation. Normative fit on the other hand focuses on the content of the category and depicts whether the given attitude, action or behaviour makes sense within normative and stereotypical expectations associated with a particular category. It thus, attempts to provide meaning through categorisation. In general, the accessibility of a category and its degree of ‘readiness’ in order to measure its fit is dependent on a number of aspects including the regularity of category activation, previous experiences of its activation, as well as the individual’s own values and beliefs through which their social world is understood (Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991).

While according to SCT our social identities can become more or less salient depending on the context (e.g. our occupational identities), our membership to groups that we may deem as contextually irrelevant can remain prominent, visible and important to others across different contexts (e.g. gender or race) and be the frame through which behaviours, attitudes and values are understood (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Thus, these more ‘visible’ identities can come to not only frame how we are seen by others and how others make sense of our attitudes and behaviours but can also in turn influence whether we are seen to belong or not. While how we see ourselves is important for achieving a positive identity, just as important and if not more so is the social validation of our identities by others (Hopkins, 2011). As Branscombe and colleagues (1999) note, discrepancies between how we see ourselves and how others see us can cause a threat to our sense of self. This can occur at the intergroup level as a result of being categorised by others through non-contextually relevant categories (categorisation threat), or at the intragroup level when individuals are not accepted by one’s ingroup because of being seen as on the periphery or non-prototypical members (acceptance threat). What is more, in an ever diverse world where we are identifying with more and more groups and our identities become more complex and interwoven,

questions have been raised about SCT's (and indeed SIT's) suitability for understanding multiple social identities as interconnected, overlapping and at times collectively salient within a context (Ramarajan, 2014). More specifically, it has been criticised for framing identity processes in relation to only a single identity group at any given time (Ramarajan, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012). As a result, a number of alternative models have been proposed to understand identity multiplicity (e.g. Intrapersonal Identity Network, Ramarajan, 2014; Social Identity Complexity, Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Identity Fusion Model, Swann et al., 2012). However, this is not to suggest that SIA does not have the scope to be used to understand multiple identities which, at times bring to the fore "contrasting meanings, competing demands and different loyalties and allegiances" (Verkuyten et al., 2019, p.393). As Haslam (2004) states, SIA is an ever-developing theory, which should be seen as an approach that continues to be developed and elaborated on, rather than as fixed. As will be discussed in the next section, SIA can contribute much to understanding multiple identities and how they are experienced in conjunction with one another across various contexts.

### **2.1.3 Multiple social identities**

Despite the critique of SIA's applicability to understanding identity multiplicity, a number of researchers have in fact drawn on it in their research on dual or multiple identities (e.g. Greenwood, 2012; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019b; Verkuyten, 2006). For example, in their work on multiple identities and immigrants, Verkuyten and colleagues (2019) note the way in which SIA helps us to understand how different social identities become relevant across different contexts, and how they can also at times overlap and relate to one another. They describe how the focus of SIA is on how people position themselves

in relation to their multiple group memberships within a social contexts and how they attempt to derive meaning and a sense of belonging through these positions.

Greenwood (2012) proposes a more integrated intersectional approach to the social identity literature, acknowledging that it becomes a useful way through which to see how multiple identities simultaneously “shape the meaning, experiences, and expressions of one another in an inextricably interlocking and irreducible fashion” (Greenwood, 2012, p.104). While her proposal focuses on gender identity in conjunction with other identities, its insights can be applied more broadly to understanding multiple identities and how they are experienced in relation to one another. Greenwood considers how recognising identities as co-existing and embedded within a context is central if social psychological research is to remain true to the social identity tradition.

Despite Tajfel himself discussing SIT as an approach “that takes into account social realities as well as their reflection in social behaviour through the mediation of *socially shared systems of beliefs*” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p.36), much research on identity has often failed to acknowledge the interplay of identity processes with socio-political factors within contexts (Reicher, 2004). Greenwood (2012) notes that the over-focus on the minimal group paradigm within SIT has led to a focus away from looking at identities as they are experienced in our social worlds, stripping them of their multiplicity and their historical and contextual meaning. Moreover, in a return to focusing on identities within their contexts, it facilitates for an acknowledgement of the power dynamics that emerge through systems of dominance and subordination, shaping not only how multiple identities are understood and seen to connect and ‘fit’ with one another, but also how they then in turn come to be experienced. Indeed, SIA emphasises that one must examine the contextually available collective theories and ideologies that are used to “make sense of, explain, justify, and rationalise their intergroup

relationships" (Turner & Reynolds, 2003, p. 147). This is of significance in particular when examining multiple identities, for these constructions of knowledge are often influenced by social systems that legitimise inequality between groups shaping how the boundaries of identity categories are understood and experienced (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Howard, 2000). Thus, drawing on a theory that explains how contextual systems of knowledge are constructed and reproduced is fundamental. This is where Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1988) comes in.

## **2.2 Constructing meaning in context: Social Representations Theory**

Social representations are systems of shared knowledge based on our ideas, values and practices that are created and ratified through processes of negotiation and renegotiation between individuals through communicative exchange (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Moscovici, 1972). They are described by Moscovici (1988, p.214), as:

“concern[ing] the contents of everyday thinking and the stock of ideas that give coherence to our religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections we create as spontaneously as we breathe. They make it possible for us to classify persons and objects, to compare and explain behaviours and to objectify them as part of our social setting”.

There are two processes of communication that are central to representations: anchoring and objectification. Anchoring is the method of attributing meaning to a new phenomenon by grounding it within existing knowledges. Thus, it describes the process of making sense of, and removing any threat from, the unfamiliar. Objectification, on the other hand, is the active process of turning abstract notions into something more

concrete that exists within our physical space by applying frames of reference and making sense of them within our everyday (Moscovici, 1988). An example of both these processes can be seen in Kilby's (2016) research on the construction of narratives about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She notes that these narratives were often paralleled with descriptions of World War II and the Cold War (anchoring) and that terrorism, and the idea of who a terrorist is, are associated with Islam and Muslims (objectification).

Through both of these mechanisms, social representations come to be generated, providing the structures through which we interpret and construct understandings of objects, behaviour and situations. Importantly however, it must be noted that there can be a number of contradicting representations that simultaneously exist alongside each other, often harmoniously. The contradictory nature of representations is conceptualised as cognitive polyphasia (Jovchelovitch, 2002; Moscovici, 1972, 2008; Provencher, 2011), which “captures how the dynamics of social interactions and cultural contexts is intertwined with processes of social knowledge and shifts the emphasis from equilibrium to process, from knowledge as given to knowing as social encounter” (Jovchelovitch, 2012, p.444). In this way, the degree to which an individual shares a given social representation with others influences whether they develop a shared sense of identity and in turn accept the established group values and norms (Howarth, 2002a). This socially shared knowledge is internalised and becomes the basis on which they orient and categorise themselves in relation to others (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011). Thus, social representations not only shape our identities, how we see ourselves, others and our social contexts; but also influence our interactions with others within these contexts (Duveen, 1993, 2001; Howarth & Andreouli, 2014).

### 2.2.1 Connecting social representations and identities

Elcheroth and colleagues (2011, p.736) note, “any theory of social identities which ignores the process by which representations of social categories are constructed and assimilated is in danger of becoming mechanical and realist (by presupposing the categories which will be interiorized), while any theory of social representations that ignores the role of social identification in organizing our relations in the world is in danger of becoming descriptive and idealist (by ignoring how we orient to different types of knowledge and assimilate them to the self)”. Many researchers have acknowledged the connections between social representations more broadly and social identity by either drawing on both in their empirical research (e.g. Andreouli, 2010; Howarth, 2002; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Obradović & Howarth, 2018; Phoenix, Howarth, & Philogène, 2017; Reddy, 2019; Reddy & Gleibs, 2019), or in proposing integrative theoretical models, e.g. Identity Process Theory (IPT; Breakwell, 1993, 2001; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) and Social Representations Approach (SRA; Elcheroth et al., 2011).

The social identities and social representations we hold are intricately linked. They are dialogical, in constant interaction, shaping and influencing one another. Not only do social representations influence the construction and the shaping of identities, social identities too play a role in the transformation of social representations in context (Breakwell, 1993). What is more, the production of knowledge is inextricably linked to social productions of power and control, particularly in relation to what becomes widespread and accepted as mainstream (Foucault, 1977; Hall, 1997; van Dijk, 1996a). Thus, in considering the connections between social representations and identities and how they shape and inform each other, it becomes important to examine the role of power in maintaining and contesting systems of inequality (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

Asymmetries of power, that is the influence and control groups have *over* others, “shape the status and recognition of different knowledge systems” (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p.24). Discursive strategies used by groups become a useful way through which to examine how representational work is communicated through language, and how this relates to contextual power dynamics (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 2006b; van Dijk, 1996a). Groups that are more dominant and in positions of power are more able to disseminate and popularise their representations of the world around them, and in turn, do so to maintain their power and status (Jovchelovitch, 1997; van Dijk, 2006b). As such, these representations can become hegemonised, and so are seen and treated as ‘truths’ (Howarth, 2004; Howarth & Andreouli, 2014), making them difficult to be disputed and challenged on an equal level due to the lack of access to resources and platforms. In this way, minority and/or marginalised groups struggle to push forward their versions of knowledge, which inevitably has consequences for their identities (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Howarth, 2006a, 2014; Howarth, Andreouli, & Kessi, 2014).

Howarth and Andreouli (2014) discuss the relationship between social representations, identities and power through a focus on ‘otherising’ representations of ‘race’ and ‘culture’. They describe how the essentialisation of such categories result in differences between groups along such lines, being understood as fundamentally incompatible thus shaping intergroup encounters. Indeed, dominant representations of marginalised groups are often framed along divisions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and are grounded in representations that can further delegitimise and even dehumanise them as ‘other’ (Billig, 2002; Picker & Roccheggiani, 2014; Raudsepp & Wagner, 2012; Tileagă, 2006; Wagner et al., 2010). Studies on national identity, for example, demonstrate how constructions of nationhood and national pride often exclude ethnic minorities, thus perpetuating narratives of incompatibility (Augoustinos & Riggs, 2007; Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet, & Duriez, 2013; Storm, 2011; Verkuyten et al., 2019).

Where ethnic minorities are included within conceptualisations of national identity however, differentiations are made between those who ‘deserve’ citizenship versus those who do not on the basis of what the individuals will provide the dominant group in return (Andreouli & Dashtipour, 2014). In fact, where minority groups may be ‘officially’ recognised as citizens of a country with equal rights, they can still be demonised and excluded hegemonically and discursively through narratives reproduced within culture, media, schools or other institutions that make up the superstructure (Andreouli & Howarth, 2012). In this way, ideas of difference that paint a negative picture of marginalised groups can continue to be disseminated, emphasised and concretised within a context. Such notions of incompatibility that emerge through these practices in turn effect experiences and indeed the legitimacy of, identity multiplicity (Verkuyten et al., 2019).

Despite all of this, it is important to acknowledge that power is by no means fixed, and thus the opportunity for resistance to these power structures and dominant representations across various contexts must not be discounted (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Howarth, 2006a). Indeed, individuals and groups are agents of change, contesting dominant representations and how they shape and have consequences on experiences of identities (Duveen & Lloyd, 1986; Howarth, 2006b). Dominant representations can be resisted by minorities and marginalised groups through the use of legitimate strategies of social influence (Moscovici, 1985; Gordon Sammut & Bauer, 2011). By resisting, they assert and communicate their identities on *their terms* and counter the ‘othering’ and dehumanising representations imposed upon them (e.g. Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014; Wagner et al., 2012).

Such acts, while they are just as much about agency, opposition and contestation (which will be returned to later in section 2.3.2 on negotiating identities), they are also about perceptions of identity incompatibility and processes of identity recognition. We

care about how others see us, therefore having our identities fully recognised by others becomes integral to our positive sense of self (Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Yet, surprisingly little research on the role of recognition by relevant others has been undertaken within social psychology. Thus, it is here where this thesis makes its main theoretical contribution and proposes a framework for studying identity that is centred around the concept of recognition. In doing so, it emphasises the role of others as crucial to understandings of processes and experiences of identity and enables for an acknowledgement of how identities intersect and interact in context, influencing how they are recognised and in turn how they come to be negotiated and performed.

### **2.3 Recognition, misrecognition and multiple identities**

With its origins in political thought and philosophy, identity recognition by others is seen as central to self-realisation (Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1992). Thus, from the outset, it explicitly centres the role of others in understanding processes related to, and experiences of, identity. Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) define recognition as the affirmation of one's identity by others, particularly, relevant others. How we are seen, or even how we think we are seen and what identities we feel are acknowledged play a significantly important role in the construction, negotiation and experience of our identities in context (Blackwood et al., 2015). In this way, actual, perceived and anticipated experiences of recognition highlight the power dynamics at play in these dynamics, for who we are is heavily reliant on how others see us (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Thus conceptually, recognition fits well within SIA's existing theorisation of identities as contextual, multifaceted, and embedded within self-other relations.

While research on recognition within social psychology has been limited, when it has been examined it has been grounded within a Social Identity Approach

(Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2013; Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins et al., 2019; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). What is more, in line with SIA's assumptions, having one's identity/identities misrecognised or denied can lead to experiences of threat to one's sense of self (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Misrecognition here, refers to the experience of one's identity as not being recognised because of stereotyped assumptions about one's membership to a group and/or its meaning (Blackwood et al., 2013). Parallels can be drawn from other literature which can be incorporated into the broader conceptualisation of the dynamics of (mis)recognition such as, research on stigmatised identities (DeJordy, 2008; Howarth, 2002a; Sedlovskaya et al., 2013), miscategorisation (Branscombe et al., 1999; Wang, Minervino, & Cheryan, 2013), identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009; Wang et al., 2013) and identity ascription (Pehrson & Green, 2010; Reddy & Gleibs, 2019). Research by Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams' (2010) on the 'black sheep effect' can also be brought in to highlight how processes of recognition are found in existing bodies of research. In their work they note how ingroups favour desirable and normative ingroup members but downgrade those who are undesirable and deviant, the results of which can lead to the exclusion or expulsion of those who threaten a positive and cohesive sense of ingroup identity (Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Jacques-Philippe, 1988; Pinto et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In linking this back to processes of recognition, what this empirical work highlights is how one's identity may be affirmed by their ingroup if they are seen to be in line with group norms. It also highlights how one's identity can be denied if they are divergent from these norms or are seen as disloyal. These experiences of misrecognition and identity denial inevitably have consequences on feelings of belonging and inclusion. As Charles Taylor (1994) explains:

“our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.” (p.25).

Importantly, when considering the recognition of multiple identities, an added dimension that needs to be examined is how understandings and representations others have of the meanings of identity categories can shape the extent to which they are affirmed by them. Thus, how categories are seen to ‘fit’ or not ‘fit’ together, regardless of how we see our own identity multiplicity and cohesiveness, can too shape experiences of (mis)recognition and identity denial. In a recently published study, Petsko and Bodenhausen (2019a) demonstrate how Black and Hispanic gay men are seen as less Black/Hispanic by their racial/ethnic in-group *because of* their sexuality. This ‘Whitening’ as they describe it, comes as a result of stereotypical associations of being gay with being economically successful, which in turn is embedded in understandings of whiteness. Thus, being Black/Hispanic and gay are seen as a contradiction and the recognition of one identity (gay) results in the lack of recognition of another (Black/Hispanic). In this way this research highlights an example of how multiple identities interact, shaping how they are seen or not seen and the social norms around identity boundaries that determine their compatibility and in turn their recognition.

Thus, exploring how identity recognition plays out becomes a useful focus through which to explore group dynamics in relation to social constructions of sameness and difference, and inclusion and exclusion, especially among those who straddle

memberships of multiple, seemingly incompatible groups. Moreover, as noted previously in discussing SIA, individuals can draw on various strategies in attempts to attain a positive identity where it has been threatened as a result of misrecognition or denial (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979). In doing so, individuals can become social actors, orchestrating the lens through which they wish their identities to be seen. In the next section the connection between recognition and identity performance is demonstrated highlighting how identity management strategies can be both influenced by experiences of (mis)recognition as well as be used to attempt to determine the validation and affirmation of one's identities by others.

### **2.3.1 The role of identity performance**

While people may see themselves as members of multiple groups, others' assumptions about who they are can override and confine their real nuances and multifaceted-ness. Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) note how some British Muslims in their study felt their views on political topics e.g. the Iraq war, are often viewed by others as coming from the perspective of their Muslim identities as opposed to their British identities. In such instances, their identity as Muslim is seen to be *over-visible* in the eyes of others, becoming the primary identity through which their opinions and behaviours are understood and interpreted. This echoes Renault's (2009) writings on recognition who notes "over-visibility" as one of the ways in which misrecognition can occur. Other examples of this can be seen in research on biracial individuals. Single racial identities can become ascribed to biracial individuals, resulting in many taking on specific performative strategies described by Khanna and Johnson (2010) as 'identity work' to highlight other, less visible, group memberships. Indeed, individuals are particularly motivated to emphasise identities when these are seen to be not respected or recognised (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). According to Swann (1987) strategies of identity negotiation

involve two competing processes between the perceiver and the target. The perceiver is described as expecting the target to behave in the way they anticipate based on their understanding of members of a given group, while the target strives to bring the perceiver to treat them in a way that verifies their self-view. As part of this, Swann describes that identity cues are taken on, i.e. visible or verbal markers to ‘look and sound the part’, minimising tension caused by the lack of self-verification. Klein, Spears, and Reicher (2007) discuss similar identity management strategies through what they term identity performance. They define it as “the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviours relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity” (p.30) and it becomes an interesting component through which to understand identities in practice. The emphasis on intention within Klein and colleagues’ definition of identity performance is important to note, as this focuses on behaviours or acts that are consciously and purposefully carried out in order to assert (or hide) one’s belonging and membership to a social category.

A number of studies have demonstrated how identity performance plays out in relation to identification processes (e.g. Alexander, 2004; Blackwood et al., 2015; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Semrow, Zou, Liu, & Cheryan, 2019). In a study on British Muslim experiences at airport security, Blackwood et al., (2015) demonstrate how some interviewees described selectively playing down their Muslimness by considering the clothes they wear in these settings (avoiding cultural dress, wearing a hijab as opposed to a niqab). These visible cues are considered because of how they can highlight their Muslimness, and therefore result in undesired visibility and possible negative experiences because of being misrecognised as a potential security threat. Meta-perceptions are important here, in that there is an active contemplation and evaluation of how we may be seen by others within particular contexts, thus in turn playing a part in the performative strategies undertaken

(Blackwood et al., 2015; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000). In another empirical example, Cheryan and Monin (2005) looked at identity denial as experienced by Asian Americans in the US. Despite participants' own claims to being both American and Asian, many felt they were often misperceived as foreign by white (i.e. prototypical) members of their American ingroup because of being asked, for example, what language they spoke and where they were from. Thus, their identity as Asian overrode and perhaps even erased their American identity by these relevant others. As a result, participants described highlighting their prototypicality to the dominant ingroup from which they were excluded by, for example, self-stereotyping as American through demonstrating their knowledge of American culture and their participation in it by watching specific TV shows. In emphasising such behaviours they hoped to gain some ingroup credit, the results of which could lead to the recognition of their American identities (see also Wang et al., 2013).

Klein and colleagues (2007) also importantly note how expressions of identity performance can play out differently for people with single identity constructs as opposed to dual or multiple constructs, and that the performance of multiple identities can be constrained by understandings of compatibility between the identity categories. Thus, where categories are seen to be incompatible, passing becomes an important identity negotiation strategy to consider. While stemming from sociological literature, passing has parallels with SIT's notion of individual mobility. Where the recognition of one's identity is not desired because of potential stigmatisation for example, and importantly where such identities can be masked, passing may be the route of 'choice'. Indeed, as Goffman (1963, p.95) notes, "because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on occasion by intent". Thus, passing can be understood "at the most basic level as an attempt to control the process of signification itself" (Schlossberg, 2001, p.3), reflecting

attempts to possibly *take back* control of experiences of misrecognition. In this way, as well as the examples of performative negotiation strategies outlined in the empirical research above, the various strategies of identity performance discussed emphasise the enactment of agency in response to, or in anticipation of, experiences related to processes of identity (mis)recognition. Therefore, despite the way in which societal power dynamics can constrain the lens through which individuals are seen and the degrees of belonging and acceptance one is afforded, individual acts of resistance can be, and are, enacted. In attempting to develop a deeper understanding of identity-related processes and the dynamics at play for individuals with multiple identities that may be seen to be in opposition, the related concepts of identity recognition and performance become important to incorporate. Indeed, as the thesis will come to demonstrate, these are central factors that need to be more actively and consciously integrated into theorisations and understandings of identities and processes of identification.

## **2.4 An integrated framework: recognition, performance, and interactional and intersecting identities in context**

In drawing on the literature discussed above, this thesis proposes a framework that develops a more nuanced understanding of processes of identification as experienced by people with multiple, and at times seemingly incompatible and contradictory identities. It aims to demonstrate the importance of exploring identities as interacting and intersecting as a means of broadening our understanding of their complexities. This framework also acknowledges the importance of examining multiple identities within their contexts, particularly in relation to how knowledge about groups is constructed, perpetuated and challenged and highlights the role that power relations play in these dynamics. For indeed, the meanings of identity categories, their norms and boundaries,

and how they are understood to ‘fit’ or not fit with one another, can influence how multiple identities are experienced. This thesis proposes that how we experience our identities is less so about how we see ourselves but rather about how we are seen by others, particularly relevant others. Thus, in bringing forward the somewhat under-research concept of recognition into this framework, this thesis re-centres the role of others as essential for understanding processes of identification and how multiple identities are experienced. For how our identities are recognised or not recognised can have serious implications on feelings of belonging. What is vital also is not to overlook how these experiences can also influence how individuals negotiate and perform their identities in relation to different social groups and in different contexts, in attempts at taking back control over how they are seen. In bringing these theoretical and conceptual strands together, this framework can shed light on the production of and challenges to constructions of group compatibility and incompatibility and the consequences this has on individuals with multiple identities in relation to experiences of inclusion and legitimacy or exclusion and marginalisation.

## **2.5 Research questions**

This thesis sets out to answer the following research questions, as set out earlier in the introduction:

*How do people with multiple, and at times, seemingly contradicting and incompatible identities experience their identities across various contexts with different relevant others? And what are the consequences in relation to recognition and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion?*

In answering these main questions, the following sub-questions are asked in relation to white British Muslims specifically, framing the empirical papers (Chapters Four, Five and Six) of the thesis:

- a) How are white British Muslims represented in mainstream national and British Muslim newspapers?*
- b) How do white Muslims perceive their identities to be recognised in different interactional contexts by relevant others (white non-Muslims and non-white Muslims)?*
- c) How do they manage their various identity performance strategies as a result?*
- d) How are white British Muslim identities actually recognised/misrecognised by relevant others?*
- e) What are the factors that affect recognition/misrecognition by relevant others?*
- f) How does recognition influence the behavioural intention of relevant others towards white British Muslims?*

The first empirical paper (Chapter Four<sup>8</sup>) begins by setting out the context in which white British Muslims experience and negotiate their identities (sub-question a). It does so by drawing on Social Representations Theory and uses Critical Discourse Analysis primarily as a methodological tool to examine the ways that white British Muslims are represented in British newspapers and how these discourses are constructed. While previous research has examined representations of Muslims more generally in mainstream media (including newspaper), no research has specifically looked at

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<sup>8</sup> Amer, A. & Howarth, C. S. (2018). Constructing and contesting threat: Representations of white British Muslims across British national and Muslim newspapers. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 48 (5), pp. 614-628.

coverage of white Muslim. Given that Muslims are by no means a homogenous group, and that white Muslims hold membership to both a dominant ingroup and minority outgroup, mapping this out is a crucial step. What is more, this paper considers discursive constructions of representations of white British Muslims in both British mainstream and British Muslim newspapers, taking into account discourses among sources from both relevant ingroup, not just the majority as previous research has done.

Sub-questions b and c explore the white British Muslim experiences of their identities within the British context, making up the second empirical paper (Chapter Five<sup>9</sup>). Social Identity Approach is used to understand the way in which they feel their identities are perceived, which are recognised or not is explored, and the ways they respond to this through strategies of performance. However, this only examines how white Muslims think their identities are seen by others, thus sub-questions d, e and f come together in the final empirical paper on the actual identity recognition of white British Muslim's multiple identities by relevant others (specifically majority and minority ingroup members) (Chapter Six<sup>10</sup>). This paper looks at the role that identity markers play in shaping processes of recognition in relation to understandings of compatibility and 'fit' and the consequences on intentions for social interactions. It also investigates how far multiple identity assertion comes to be recognised or not recognised and considers what this means for fellow majority and minority ingroup members in relation to threats to intergroup distinctiveness and negativity towards these individuals who claim multiple group memberships. Together these three empirical papers explore the connections between identity, recognition and the boundaries of

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<sup>9</sup> Amer, A. (2020). Between recognition and mis/nonrecognition: Strategies of negotiating and performing identities among white Muslims in the United Kingdom. *Political Psychology*, 41(3), pp. 533-548.

<sup>10</sup> Amer, A., Halabi, S., & Gleibs, I. (in preparation). Being white and Muslim: identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by their respective ingroups.

inclusion and exclusion through a focus on white British Muslims. Before these empirical papers are presented however, first, the methodological framework of this thesis is discussed in relation to how it helps answer the research questions.

## **Chapter Three: Methodological Framework**

This chapter presents the methodological framework for the overall PhD. It first provides an overview of the methodological approach, then outlines the rationale for the specific research methods employed and provides an in-depth report of the methodological approaches and procedures.

As the PhD is written as a paper-based thesis, there is a significant amount of overlap and repetition between the current chapter and the relevant methods sections of the later empirical chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six). However, in including a methodology chapter it allows for further detail and discussion about the methodological approaches used without the constraints of word limits for publications.

### **3.1 Research design**

#### **3.1.1 Overview**

The PhD explores the identities of individuals with multiple, and at times seemingly incompatible identities through focusing on the experiences of white British Muslims in the UK. This group was chosen as they straddle both dominant ingroup membership by being white British and marginalised outgroup membership by being Muslim within the British context. Thus, they make for an interesting group from which to examine the consequences of multiple identities and their compatibility or incompatibility. In addition, as there is little research on white Muslims identities within the field of social psychology this PhD research can contribute to this gap in knowledge and further understanding of experiences of this group.

The research questions guiding the PhD are outlined below (see Table 3.1 below for an outline of the research design). Three empirical studies were designed to answer

the research questions, each building on the other, with previous findings shaping the design of subsequent studies. A mixed-methods approach was taken. For the first study, a Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to newspaper articles to explore and establish the context in which identities are negotiated, (study 1, Chapter Four). In understanding the context, the second study goes on to use thematic analysis to explore experiences, identity negotiation, and performative strategies from the perspective of white Muslims themselves. Interviews with self-identifying white Muslims were conducted, transcribed and thematically analysed (study 2, Chapter Five). The final study drew on the findings from study 2 where perceived identity recognition, misrecognition and its denial by others featured prominently as a factor in negotiation and performative strategies. An experiment was designed in the form of an online survey to explore how relevant others (i.e. non-white British Muslims, and white British non-Muslims) recognise white Muslim identities, the factors that influence this and the consequences and repercussions on behavioural intention for interaction. This data was analysed using ANOVA and a mediation analysis (study 3, Chapter Six).

**Table 3.1** Research design.

Research questions	Data collection	Analysis	Publication
<i>a) How are white British Muslims represented in mainstream national and British Muslim newspapers?</i>	<b>Study 1:</b> Newspaper articles collected from Lexis Nexis and British Library Archives. Total N=1631 Total analysed N=161	Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 2006b, 1996b).	Published in European Journal of Social Psychology; <b>Amer &amp; Howarth, 2018. (Chapter Four)</b>
<i>b) How do white Muslims perceive their identities to</i>	<b>Study 2:</b> Interviews	Thematic Analysis	Published in Political

<p><i>be recognised in different interactional contexts by relevant others (white non-Muslims and non-white Muslims)?</i></p> <p>c) <i>How do they manage their various identity performance strategies as a result?</i></p>	<p>across England and Wales. N=26 (15 males, 11 females).</p>	<p>(Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006)</p>	<p>Psychology; <b>Amer, 2020.</b> <b>(Chapter Five)</b></p>
<p>d) <i>How are white British Muslim identities actually recognised/misrecognised by relevant others?</i></p> <p>e) <i>What are the factors that affect recognition/misrecognition from by relevant others?</i></p> <p>f) <i>How does recognition influence the behavioural intention of relevant others towards white British Muslims?</i></p>	<p><b>Study 3:</b> Experiment 1a (N=343) Experiment 1b (N=164) Experiment 2a (N=350) Experiment 2b (N=182)</p>	<p>ANOVA between subjects and within subjects design; Moderation and mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013).</p>	<p>To be submitted; <b>Amer, Halabi &amp; Gleibs, in preparation.</b> <b>(Chapter Six)</b></p>

### 3.1.2 Rationale for mixed-methods design

In answering the research questions outlined, a mixed methods approach to the overall project was taken. Due to the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, they are often set on opposite ends of research paradigm scales (Brannen, 2005). On the one hand, qualitative research is often exploratory in nature and allows for rich and detailed data to emerge about experiences and points of view of the participants (although this can also include reflexive accounts from researcher/s). It draws on methods such as ethnographies, focus groups, interviews, and speech or text analysis. Quantitative research on the other hand focuses on data that often directly answers a more specific research question and tests its predictions or hypothesis.

Variables can also be isolated to better understand the relationships, connections and interactions of various elements in producing an outcome (e.g. attitudes, beliefs, preferences). This type of research is often explored through experiments, surveys and questionnaires.

Mixed methods research draws upon the strength of both these methods and allows each to complement the other in answering the appropriate research questions. It also provides room to elaborate, enhance and develop the understanding of the topic of focus (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). As Schwandt (2000) and many others (e.g. Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016) point out, an emphasis on the complementarity of these two methodological approaches can be far more useful. Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, (2012) define mixed methods research as a “synthesis” of approaches that provides “the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (p.129). They also suggest three ‘types’ of mixed methods research; ‘pure’ mixed methods, quantitative-dominant mixed methods and qualitative-dominant mixed methods. It is this latter methodological paradigm, proposed as “the type of mixed research in which one relies on a qualitative, constructivist-poststructuralist-critical view of the research process, while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects” (p. 124) that is applied to this PhD. The studies build on and inform each other sequentially to understand experiences of recognition and identity performance strategies among white British Muslims helping shed light on identification processes and practices of individuals with multiple identities. The first two studies were qualitative, whereby a Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to newspaper articles and a thematic analysis to interview transcripts. The findings of these studies, in particular study 2, then shaped study 3 and its quantitative methodological design.

### 3.2 Reflexivity

All research is interpretive. Thus, it is crucial that as researchers we are consciously and actively open, aware and reflexive of our identities, positionalities and subjective assumptions when undergoing empirical research, be that when collecting, or indeed when interpreting, our data. Below, I reflect upon my personal positioning and identity in the research process.

In the introduction of this thesis I introduce my mother, a white Muslim. In having this personal connection with the focus of the thesis, I position myself quite close to the data I have collected. When conducting the interviews, participants were often curious of my motivations for the research and my own identity. Being visibly Muslim through having an Arabic name and wearing the *hijab* – albeit in a non-traditional style – my Muslimness is clear. What is more, while my British identity is generally acknowledged, and most people recognise that I am from London due to my accent, my mixed heritage – white-European and Arab – is less clear, and I am instead often positioned as solely Arab/Middle Eastern. When sharing that my mother is white and had converted to Islam, participants often became reassured that I would understand, respect and appreciate what they would have to share. Indeed, sameness between the researcher and the participant can encourage openness, allowing participants to share their experiences more willingly (Bhopal, 2010). As Bhopal (2010) notes personal experiences and ‘presentation of self’ are important components of the researcher-participant dynamic. Yet, the differences and power imbalances between myself and the participants based on our differing ethnic identities as well as the researcher-participant relationship must still be acknowledged (Phoenix, 1994). Nevertheless, I believe this indirect connection through my mother’s identity acted as a benefit. My closeness to the data and somewhat understanding the experiences of the

participants in relation to their national, ethnic and religious identities assisted in drawing out the subtleties in the findings, enabling importance to be attributed to parts of the data which may otherwise have been overlooked (Phoenix, 1994).

I have learnt a lot from conducting this research and I must acknowledge that there were some expectations that I carried with me at the start. In doing my best to remain critical I endeavoured, as much as possible, to allow the data to shape the direction of the thesis. This is reflected in the emergence of certain theoretical concepts that became central to the thesis that I had not initially anticipated. At the beginning of my PhD journey, I began with a study of representation of white Muslims in British newspapers (both mainstream and British Muslim), which enabled me to not only get a sense of dominant narratives and perceptions of this group within the current wider British context but also from the minority ingroup perspective. Next, I turned to hearing directly from white Muslims themselves about their experiences, how they feel they are seen and treated by others and how they negotiate their identities within these contexts. It is this study and the findings that emerged from the analysis that brought about the centrality of the concept of recognition in identification experiences. Thus, recognition became the focus of the third study which explored the role of identity markers and signifiers in processes of identity recognition as well as an examination of connecting factors such as distinctiveness threat when multiple identities are asserted. In this way, each study built on the previous, providing an overview of the social context in which white British Muslims do their identities, their individual experiences in relation to this context and others within it, the relevance of how they perceive themselves to be seen by these others, and how they are actually seen by their relevant ingroup members.

Next, I turn to discussing each of the studies and their methodologies separately, providing justification for each of the data collection techniques and analyses.

### **3.3 Ethics**

All the studies in the thesis met the British Psychological Society ethical guidelines (including the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics for studies 2 and 3). Ethical approval was certified for all three studies by the Ethics Chair of the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics. Where participants were used (studies 2 and 3), consent forms and information sheets were provided, detailing the purpose of the studies, how the data from their participation will be used, and details on steps taken to ensure their anonymity. Participants were also debriefed at the end of the studies (studies 2 and 3), were given the opportunity to ask further questions before concluding the sessions (study 2), and were also given my contact details if they wished to contact me after the data was collected (studies 2 and 3).

### **3.4 Study 1: Mainstream British and British Muslim newspapers**

#### **Research question:**

*How are white British Muslims represented in mainstream national and British Muslim newspapers?*

The first study focused on understanding the context in which white British Muslim identities are negotiated. It did so by exploring discourses about white British Muslims in the media, specifically newspapers, with the aim to draw out the discursive constructions of the content of social representations about white British Muslims that exist within the UK context. This study and its findings make up Chapter 4 of the thesis

and was published as an empirical paper in the European Journal of Social Psychology in 2018.

### **3.4.1 Rationale for newspapers**

The media plays an important role in the acquiring of knowledge and understanding in society (Farr, 1993). Much social psychological research exploring social representations of groups, behaviours or various phenomena, including that which was conducted by Moscovici himself whose famous work on psychoanalysis established the foundation of Social Representations Theory, has drawn on the media as the source of their data. Newspapers in particular make for an interesting medium through which to examine the construction of representations through discourse due to their ability to publish a large number of stories through their often daily publication, and their wide circulation, enabling them to disseminate topical information in a timely and wide-reaching manner (Mendes, 2011). Thus, they can shed light on what information is circulating in a given context, and how it is framed.

In rationalising the use of newspapers in this study it is also important to consider a critical lens on their use as a source for social representations in research. Studies exploring representations and discourses in the newspapers often focus on mainstream publications and channels. While they can indeed reflect the general public's understandings of an issue, it is critical to note that this overlooks, and as a result excludes, the alternative discourses that are present in minority-led news sources (Budarick & Han, 2013; Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Husband, 1998). Thus, this study makes a valuable and original contribution to existing literature by incorporating an analysis of discourse construction in chosen minority-led outlets which often act as a challenge to dominant, mainstream discourses, becoming spaces in which alternative or marginalised voices emerge.

In exploring social representations, it is important to not overlook the role of the audience as agents in the acceptance or resistance of discourse construction (Foster, 2006; Livingstone, 1998). However, while the audience should not be seen as passive, it could still impose little influence on discourse construction in mainstream news media as it is often controlled by elite groups or institutions with specific agendas (van Dijk, 1996a). Indeed, in considering the media as a source for examining social representations, the link between power and the media does need to be acknowledged. As Chauhan and Foster (2014) note, “journalists have an important role to play in imparting information on complex, abstract topics of which the reader might have little or no direct experience” (p.391). Much research has illustrated the way in which mainstream media is able to have power over the construction and sharing of attitudes, beliefs and ideologies (Elcheroth et al., 2011; van Dijk, 1996b). Thus, “symbolic” and “persuasive” characteristics of news media that dominates the mainstream can have substantial effects on its audiences, particularly as these constructions of knowledge can be difficult (although not impossible) to challenge, critique and resist (van Dijk, 1996a, p.10). As a result, media channels such as newspapers can be an interesting and useful resource to shed light on the representations that exist in society, as well the way in which these representations are constructed, reproduced and resisted.

### **3.4.2 Sampling**

In order to collate a comprehensive account of mainstream British and British Muslim news coverage of white British Muslims and to note any possible changes in the coverage over time, a 25-year period was analysed, from January 1990 to December 2014. The selection criteria for the newspapers were centred around circulation rates<sup>11</sup> and political orientation, ensuring that papers from across the political spectrum were

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<sup>11</sup> Figures obtained from Turvill, (2015).

included (see Table 3.2 below). As a result, six national newspapers, both tabloids and broadsheets, and two newspapers produced by Muslim communities in Britain were also selected. Information on the political orientation of British Muslim newspapers could not be obtained. In addition, one British Muslim newspaper, The Muslim Weekly, was established in 2003, thus its coverage of white British Muslims was examined from this date until December 2014 (12-year period).

**Table 3.2** Circulation rates of newspapers

Newspaper	Circulation	Political leaning
The Independent	60 438	Centre-left
The Guardian	178 758	Left-leaning
The Daily Telegraph (and Sunday Telegraph)	486 262 (and 380 922)	Centre-right
The Times (and Sunday Times)	397 171 (and 793 517)	Centre-right
The Daily Mail (and the Mail on Sunday)	1 657 867 (and 1 497 855)	Right-leaning
The Mirror	868 992 (and 833 379)	Centre-left
The Muslim News	140,000 <sup>a</sup>	-
The Muslim Weekly	40,000 <sup>b</sup>	-

### 3.4.3 Procedure

#### *National newspapers*

All national newspapers were accessed using LexisNexis, an online database that includes both online and in-print news articles. Ten search terms were used (see Table 3.3) covering multiple variations of the ways in which white British Muslims may be referred to.

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<sup>a</sup> Figure obtained from Gilliat-Ray, (2011)

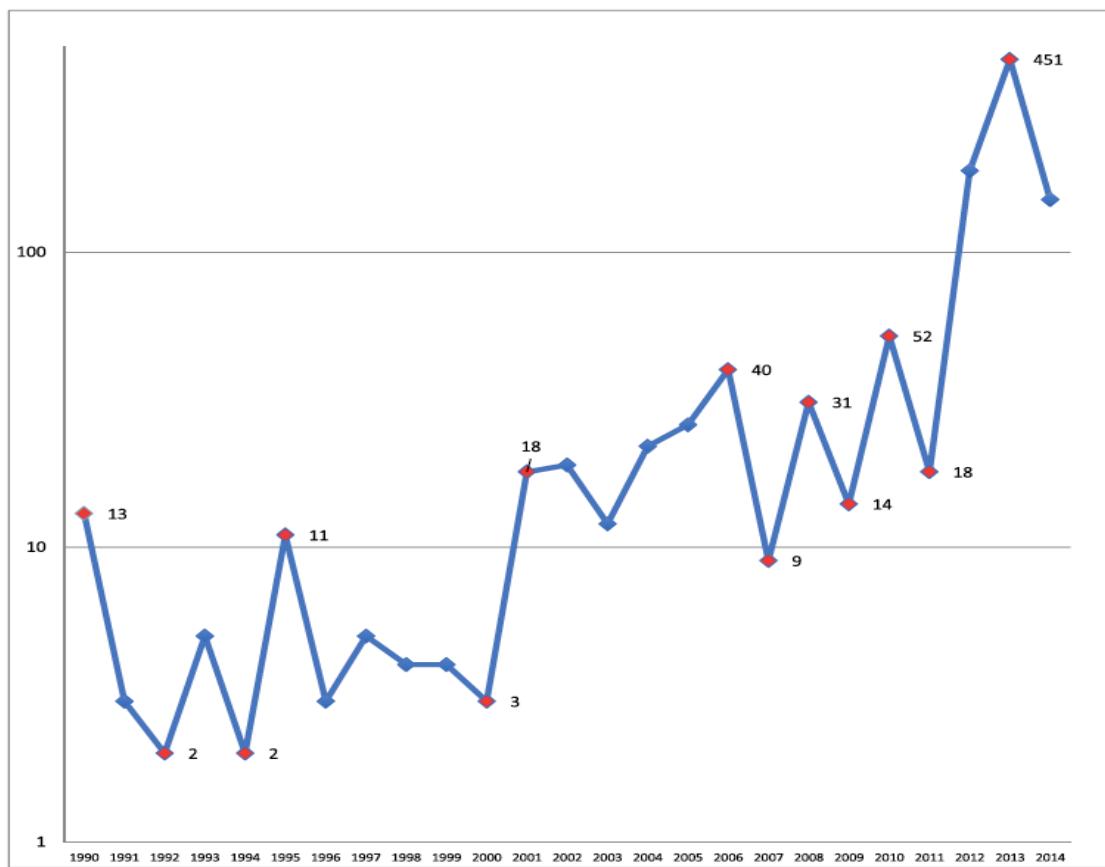
<sup>b</sup> Figure obtained from Werbner, (2011).

A total of 1631 articles matched the search terms. However, as it was impractical to develop a Critical Discourse Analysis on such a large amount of data, a process was implemented (set out below) that reduced the dataset to a more manageable 161 articles.

**Table 3.3** Search terms and the number of article hits displayed on the LexisNexis online database in descending order.

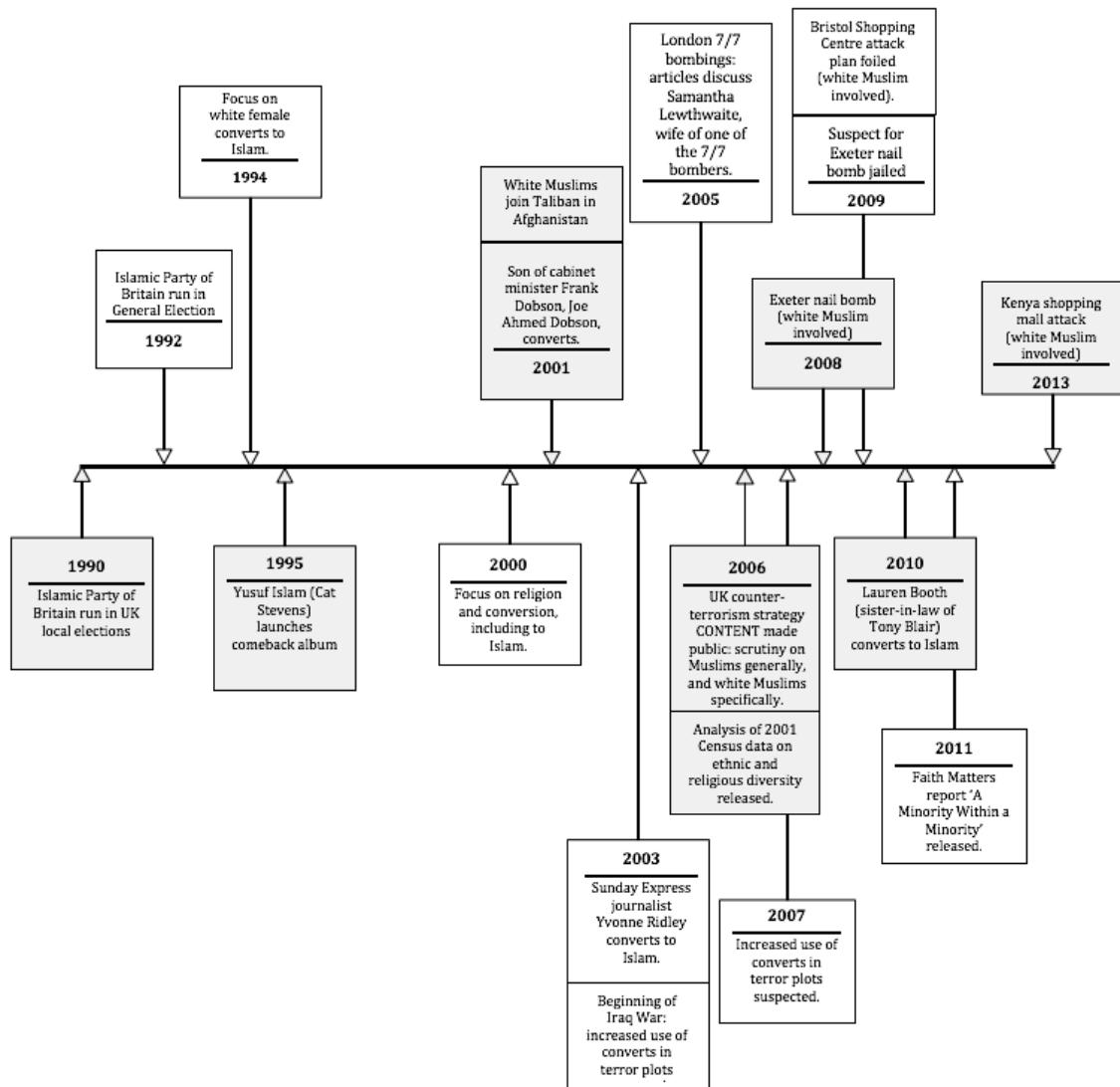
Search term	Number of articles
<i>Muslim/Islam and British and white or convert</i>	959
<i>English and convert and Islam or Muslim</i>	254
<i>'white Muslim'</i>	208
<i>'white convert' and Islam or Muslim</i>	100
<i>'English convert' and Islam or Muslim</i>	33
<i>'white British convert' and Islam or Muslim</i>	30
<i>'white British Muslim'</i>	20
<i>'white Briton' and Islam or Muslim</i>	17
<i>'English Muslim'</i>	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1631</b>

1. First, the number of articles per year across the 25-year period were mapped out, noting the ‘peaks’ (years where there were a greater number of articles on white British Muslims) and ‘troughs’ (years with relatively few articles about white British Muslims) (see Figure 3.1). All articles published in the years with the highest ‘peaks’ (1990, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2013) were selected for the analysis. The years with the lowest number of articles published (1992, 1994, 2000, 2007, 2009, and 2011) were also selected and incorporated into the analysis to make note of what stories about white British Muslims were deemed newsworthy in a time of ‘relative quiet’ or disinterest. Below Figure 3.2 highlights the dominant stories across the years analysed.



**Figure 3.1** Graph of number of articles about white Muslims using a logarithmic scale.

2. As the study focused on understanding representations of white British Muslims through the language of news reporting, the dataset was then filtered to include news articles and editorials only. Editorials were included in the data set as they reflect a news outlet's political orientation and ideological stance, an important aspect in understanding the source of a news text when conducting CDA. No images were analysed as LexisNexis does not store any images, photographs, or videos in online or printed articles.



**Figure 3.2** Timeline of dominant topics covered in the selected years.

3. An additional process was implemented on the articles published in 2013 due to their significantly higher number compared with other years (451 articles published in 2013 out of a total number of 1631; see Figure 3.1). This was due to a frenzy of reporting about the whereabouts of Samantha Lewthwaite, wife of 7/7 bomber Jermaine Lindsey and her alleged involvement in the Nairobi terror attack. There was also increased focus on 'foreign' fighters joining wars and conflicts such as in Syria, some of whom were converts. Thus, to reduce the

number to a more manageable amount for the analysis, these articles were listed chronologically with every fifth article being included for analysis.

### ***British Muslim newspapers***

Past copies of The Muslim News and The Muslim Weekly were accessed via the British Library Archives as they were not available on LexisNexis. All articles about white British Muslims were collected manually and were scanned for the same ten search terms previously used for the national newspapers and tabloids. A total of 34 articles were collected (11 articles from The Muslim News and 23 from The Muslim Weekly) and made up the Muslim newspaper dataset for the analysis.

#### **3.4.4 Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; van Dijk, 1988, 1996, 2002) was used in conjunction with Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1972) to further develop an understanding of the processes through which social representations are created, recreated and challenged in discourse. As van Dijk (2006) states, discourses are the observable means through which social representations shared by a social group can come to be understood and examined in detail. Thus, in taking a discursive approach it allowed for the content of representations to be explored and unpacked as well as how they are used in presentation and re-presentation processes. Together CDA and SRT made for a powerful grouping, as they pave the way for a more holistic understanding of the nuances in discourse influencing the formation, maintenance, and contestation of social representations, particularly in relation to the dynamics of power.

The articles were organised in an Excel workbook in order to manage the large volume of data. All the articles were first analysed by the first author. A random selection was also analysed independently by the second author, allowing for points of

difference and overlap to be discussed in depth. The analytical framework was then developed from these discussions, taking into account the type of newspaper (British Muslim newspapers/national newspaper/national tabloid), political orientation of the newspaper, the title given and by-line of the articles.

The analysis considered the discursive themes that emerged from the articles. A number of different discursive themes are found across the articles, namely, white British Muslims as a threat/not a threat, their conversion as rational/irrational, and the issue of British and Muslim identity compatibility/incompatibility (see Appendix 1 for coding frame). As part of this, the articles were analysed through the consideration of particular analytical categories proposed by van Dijk (2006). These were ‘actor description’, ‘authority’, ‘evidentiality’, ‘comparison’, ‘generalisation’ and ‘number games’ (see Table 3.4 for definitions). The relationship between these categories and the discursive ways in which processes of anchoring and objectification identified in SRT were played out in the text were also noted. For example, the ‘number game’ is a method of quantification that can be used to objectify abstract constructs, and authority and evidentiality are used as ways of anchoring representations as ‘truth’ claims, forming hegemonic representations or a seemingly solid social fact.

**Table 3.4** Analytical categories for CDA (van Dijk, 2006b).

<b>Analytical category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Actor description	The way in which actors are described in discourses and how this reflects in-group and out-group membership.
Authority	The role of authority in argumentation to make specific cases and create ‘truths’.
Evidentiality	Linked to authority in that it is a technique which is used to demonstrate ‘truths’ either through authority or other recognised sources.

Comparison	Method through which imposed group membership is attained.
Generalisation	Broad statements about in-group or out-group usually the former being positive and the latter negative.
Number game	The use of numbers and statistics in argumentation.

Different ‘voices’ within the texts were also noted (Fairclough, 1995b) providing insight into the relationship between discourses and power. Who is given a platform and who is not, how much of a platform are actors within the text given and how this is set up, were all important factors to consider as different voices were rarely given equal claim to space, thus influencing dominant representations that are circulated (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Hall, 1992). Indeed, as van Dijk (1988) notes, elite actors tend to be given more voice, with their statements often forming the basis of news reports.

### 3.5 Study 2: Interviews

#### Research questions:

*How do white Muslims perceive their identities to be recognised in different interactional contexts by relevant others (white non-Muslims and non-white Muslims)?  
And how do they manage their various identity performance strategies as a result?*

Having established some of the complex and contradictory social representations that exist within the British context about white British Muslims, the second study built on the first by focusing on the identity negotiation practices of self-identifying white British Muslim in relation to the way in which they perceive themselves and their

identities to be positioned by relevant others. These relevant others were both other British Muslims, and other white British people who were not Muslim. The study drew on interview transcripts that were thematically analysed to answer the research questions. In analysing the data, perceived identity recognition emerged as playing an important factor in the identity negotiation and performance strategies of white British Muslims. This study makes up Chapter Five of the thesis and was published as an empirical paper in Political Psychology in 2019.

### **3.5.1 Rationale for interviews**

Interviews are a useful medium through which to explore personal reflections of experiences. Described by Kvale (1996), they are “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 174). Whilst structurally varying in flexibility (structured, semi-structured and unstructured) interviews are a popular methodological tool in social science research as they enable in depth data gathering.

A semi-structured interview approach was adopted for the current study, allowing for a thorough exploration of white British Muslim experiences of identity negotiation and performance. This was chosen for its semi-explorative design, providing space for participants to share their experiences almost uninterrupted, but ensuring it was still guided by a topic guide that allowed the research questions to be answered (Berg, 2007). Such in-depth data would have been difficult to gather through other means (e.g. questionnaire or focus group) as the research questions required a reflexive element which gave space and time for thinking through perceived positionings and an interpretation of experiences. Furthermore, it also allowed for greater understanding between the interviewer and the interviewee, where questions

could be rephrased or simplified, and responses could be expanded on and clarified (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007).

Hammersley and Gomm (2008) critique interviews as a methodological tool in that participants will often only share as much as they are willing to, and their responses can be influenced by not only the framing of questions but also their expectations or assumptions of the ‘expected’ answers. Nevertheless, much research has demonstrated the positive results of building a rapport and trust with participants in relation to responses given (Nandi & Platt, 2017).

### **3.5.2 Participants**

Twenty-six self-identifying white Muslims participated in the study (11 females, 15 males). Their ages ranged from 24 to 78 ( $M=45$ ). All but one participant had converted to Islam. Those who had converted had done so at various stages in their lives (e.g., as teenagers, at university, later in life) and had been Muslim for between four to forty-six years at the time of the interview. The one non-convert participant was born and brought up Muslim, her parents having converted to Islam prior to her birth in the late 1980s. All participants were born and grew up in the UK and were living in Britain at the time of the interview. To protect their anonymity, all participants were given pseudonyms. Where they had English names, they were given English pseudonyms and where they had Arabic/Islamic names equivalent pseudonyms were provided (see Appendix 2 for details of each participant).

### **3.5.3 Procedure**

Participants were recruited via a call-out on social media (e.g. Twitter) as well as through snowballing. The interviews were conducted across England (Colchester, Dover, Gloucester, Leeds, London, Luton, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Wolverhampton) and in Wales (Cardiff). They were conducted in a place of the

participant's choice to ensure they felt as comfortable as possible, although they were informed that a meeting room was available at the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, LSE. Most interviews were conducted in participants' homes. However, some took place in a local café or in the LSE meeting room.

Participants were required to read through and sign a consent form before the start of the interview (see Appendix 3) and were given the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the interview process and the research. As noted above in the section on reflexivity in this chapter (section 3.2), during the interviews, I was conscious of how participants positioned me in relation to my religious and ethnic identities and their visibility. Furthermore, I was aware of how my position as a researcher would also influence the dynamics of the interview setting. In an attempt to address this, participants were given the opportunity to freely ask questions about myself, my own identity and my relationship to the research topic, and I was open and honest with my answers. Most interviewees were more forthcoming knowing that the research was looking at their experiences as white British Muslims and not on the reasons why they converted, a topic that many believed to be all too often the main focus of interest.

The interviews were semi-structured and began with asking participants to say a bit about themselves, their backgrounds and the prominence of Islam in their lives. This allowed the interviewee to be eased into the interview and to collect some contextual detail about the participants that could add to understanding their identity experiences e.g. for converts - when they converted. The interview topic guide (see Appendix 4) explored themes of self-identification (e.g. In terms of identity, what is important to how you see yourself?), their practice and visibility of identity (e.g. How/Do you display your Muslim identity through visual means? Is this something that is important to you? Why/why not?) and perceived identification by others (e.g. How do you think

other people see you?). Interviews lasted between 70-180 minutes ( $M=118$  minutes) and were audio-recorded. At the end of the interview, participants were again reminded of the purpose of the research and had another opportunity to ask any questions they may have had.

### **3.5.4 Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, by myself, for analysis (see Appendix 5 for sample transcript). A thematic analysis was conducted in accordance to the steps outlines by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analytical method was selected as it provides a systematic framework that enables researchers to organise and identify patterns of meaning in the data which aids in answering the research questions while highlighting similarities and differences across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thus, it allows for an exploratory approach to answering the research question, providing theoretical flexibility as it is not tied to any specific theoretical or epistemological perspectives. In the case of this study and its research questions, patterns of experiences of white British Muslims in relation to their multiple identities were identified along with the ways in which performative strategies were drawn upon. As noted above (Section 3.5.3), participants were asked to talk about their backgrounds. This information was collected in order to add possible context to the data collected but was not the focus of the analysis.

To begin the analysis, all the transcripts were read through in order to become more familiar with the data. Next, the first ten transcripts were read closely and coded before a codebook was generated by collapsing the codes into patterns of shared meaning, creating basic themes. Importantly, Braun and Clarke (2006) note that it becomes important to acknowledge the active role of the researcher in identifying and sorting out the patterns, commonalities and inconsistencies across the interview

transcripts. Themes are by no means simply residing in the data but are consciously selected and emphasised by the researcher because they “capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). Thus, in being reflexive of the analytical approach taken in this study, and to add strength and validity to the analysis, four interviews were double-coded by an independent researcher. These codes were discussed, and only minor adjustments were needed to be made to the codebook. For example, the code “Challenging incompatibility” was added to make a distinction between participants talking about challenging the notion of being British and Muslim as being incompatible (often assumed by other white people), and the code “Redefining British Islam” where participants stressed the importance of an Islam that reflects their lives in Britain (aimed more at other Muslims). This coding framework was then applied to the remaining interviews. However, the coding framework was not treated as fixed, and modifications were made as the remaining interviews were coded, refining the themes before developing the final organising themes. Upon completion of the coding thirty-five codes were then sorted into eight themes and two overarching global themes (see Appendix 6 for thematic map and Appendix 7 for codebook and examples of quotes).

### **3.6 Study 3: Experiments**

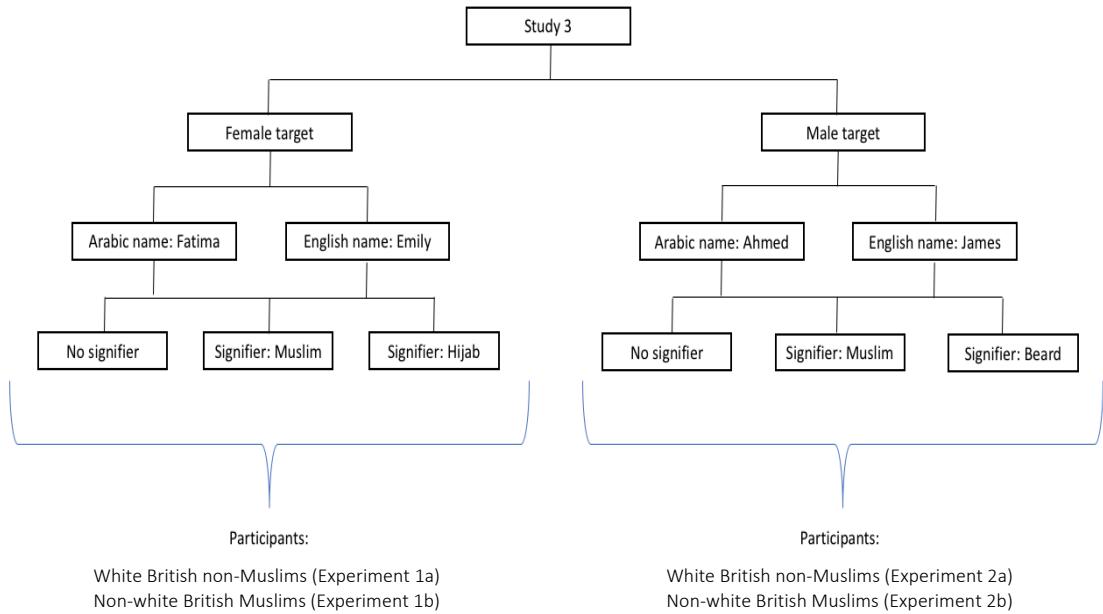
#### **Research questions:**

*How are white British Muslim identities actually recognised/misrecognised by relevant others? What are the factors that affect recognition/misrecognition by relevant others?*

*And how does recognition influence the behavioural intention of relevant others towards white British Muslims?*

The third study drew on the main finding of study 2 with regards to identity recognition. As study 2 establish perceived identity recognition, study 3 sought to understand actual identity recognition (or misrecognition) of white British Muslims by relevant others. It examined the influence of visible identity markers and signifiers on recognition, its consequences on behavioural intention and the extent to which complex and seemingly incompatible identities were recognised after they were fully revealed. The study examined these dynamics of recognition in relation to the identities of both white British Muslim women and white British Muslim men, as done by relevant others, namely, white British non-Muslim participants and non-white British Muslim participants.

The study was split into four experiments (online survey created in Qualtrics); Experiment 1a and 1b (female target), and 2a and 2b (male target). Experiments 1a and 2a focused on white British non-Muslim participants, and Experiments 1b and 2b focused on non-white British Muslim participants. The procedure for these experiments was generally the same and is described below in detail under section 3.6.3. Any differences are clearly explained. Figure 3.3 provides an overview of the study design. This study and its findings make up Chapter Six of the PhD thesis and is currently in preparation for submission as an empirical paper.



**Figure 3.3** Design overview of study 3

### 3.6.1 Rationale for experiment

As studies 1 and 2 were explorative, embedded in the context and subjectivities of white British Muslims, it was important that study 3, designed as a quantitative study, drew upon findings from the previous two studies and related literature, and tested actual identity (mis)recognition and its consequences. In doing so, it allowed for an operationalisation of understanding identity recognition, negotiation and performance, as well as its consequences for individuals with multiple, and at times seemingly incompatible, identities. Furthermore, in factoring in possible mediators it shed light on better understand the relationship between identity salience, identity performance, recognition and behavioural intentions for interaction (e.g. accepting invitation for tea).

The quantitative study complemented the previous two qualitative studies well and enabled for the exploration of actual identity recognition in a way that would have been more difficult in, for example, an interview or focus group setting. The complexity and social and political relevance of the topic in relation to understandings of belonging, may have led participants to be cautious of their responses and respond in a socially

desirable way. In addition, my own visibility as Muslim (see section 3.5 above for more detail of researcher reflexivity) could have made obtaining realistic results about identity recognition difficult. Conducting an experiment via an online survey allowed me to gather data as anonymously as possible and from a large number of participants, thus although social desirability effects may still be present, it enabled for broader claims to be made about processes and mechanisms of identity recognition, particularly in relation to the multiple and seemingly oppositional identities of white British Muslims.

### **3.6.2 Participants**

#### ***Experiment 1a: female target, white British non-Muslim participants***

Participants were recruited for the study via Prolific, an online platform for sourcing participants for research participation and were paid the UK minimum wage<sup>12</sup>. A total of 361 white British non-Muslim participated. The data was however screened to exclude any non-‘White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)’ participants (N=12) as well as those who did not pass the manipulation check (N=6). The final sample was N=343 of which 169 were female, 172 were male and 2 non-binary. Participants’ age ranged between 18 to 74 ( $M=34.70$ ,  $SD=12.31$ ).

Using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), a sensitivity analysis for the 2 (Name: Emily, Fatima) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No Signifiers) between subjects design indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta=.80$  and  $\alpha=.05$  to detect effects as small as  $F=.22$ .

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<sup>12</sup> This payment met UK minimum wage requirements (April 2019) at £8.28 per hour. Participants were paid £0.69 for the 5-minute study.

### ***Experiment 1b: female target, non-white British Muslim participants***

A total of 237 participants completed the study (117 via snowballing and through advertising on social media and 120 via Prolific). As a result of some of the data being collected on social media a substantial number of extraneous data was found and therefore need to be filtered to exclude those who did not fit the participant criteria. These included non-Muslims/no religious identity, participants below 18 years of age/not reported, those who identified as ‘White’ and participants who failed the manipulation check (total N=73). The final sample was N=164 of which 107 were female and 56 were male and 1 identified as non-binary. Participants’ age ranged between 18 to 53 ( $M=28.64$ ,  $SD=7.99$ ). Their ethnicities were ‘Black (African, Caribbean, other Black background)’ N=11, ‘Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)’ N=120, ‘Asian other background’ N=7, ‘Arab/Middle Eastern’ N=12, ‘Mixed/Multiple ethnic group’ N=11 and ‘None of the above’ N=3.

The lower sample size in comparison to the previous experiment is reflective of the participant target population being hard to reach. Nevertheless, a sensitivity analysis for the 2 (Name: Emily, Fatima) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No Signifiers) between subjects design using G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta=.80$  and  $\alpha=.05$  to detect effects as small as  $F=.32$ .

### ***Experiment 2a: male target, white British non-Muslim participants***

A total of 366 British participants were recruited for the study via Prolific. Data was screened to exclude any non-‘White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)’ (N=11) and those who failed the manipulation checks (N=5). The final sample was N=350 of which 178 were female and 172 were male. Participants’ age ranged between 18 to 75 ( $M=36$ ,  $SD=12.64$ ).

A sensitivity analysis for the 2 (Name: James, Ahmed) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, No Signifiers) between subjects design using G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007)

indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta=.80$  and  $\alpha=.05$  to detect effects as small as  $F=.22$ .

### ***Experiment 2b: male target, non-white British Muslim participants***

A total of 200 participants completed the study (69 via snowballing and through advertising on social media and 121 via Prolific). Once again, as a result of the survey being advertised via social media the data was required to be filtered to exclude participants who did not fit the criteria of the experiment. These included any non-Muslim participants (N=9), participants whose age was under 18 or who had not reported their age (N=5), those who defined themselves as ‘White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)’ or ‘White other background’ (N=13) and those who failed the manipulation check (N=5). The final sample was N=168 of which 118 were female and 50 were male. Participants’ ages ranged between 18 to 61 ( $M=27.39$ ,  $SD=8.32$ ). The majority were ‘Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)’ (N=112), and the remaining were ‘Asian other background’ (N=8), ‘Black (African, Caribbean, other Black background’ (N=8), ‘Arab/Middle Eastern’ (N=12), ‘Mixed/Multiple ethnic group’ (N=25) or did not specify (N=3).

Once again, there was a lower sample size compared to Experiments 1a and 2a because of the hard to reach group. A sensitivity analysis was nevertheless carried out (using G\*power; (Faul et al., 2007)) for the 2 (Name: James, Ahmed) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, No Signifiers) between subjects design which indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta=.80$  and  $\alpha=.05$  to detect effects as small as  $F=.32$ .

#### **3.6.3 Procedure**

All experiments were designed using the same template. Experiments 1a and 1b focused on the recognition of a female target, thus after completing an online consent form, participants were randomly assigned to either cell of a 2 (Name: Emily, Fatima) X 3

(Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No Signifiers) in a between-subjects design. Experiment 2a and 2b however focused on the recognition of a male target, thus participants were randomly assigned to either cell of a 2 (Name: James, Ahmed) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, No Signifiers) in a between-subjects design. Participants were led to believe that the purpose of the study was to examine people's assessment of characteristics of others based on limited information provided (see Appendix 8 for example of survey for one of the conditions – 'Emily, no signifier').

For the purpose of simplification, the procedure will be outlined below as it was for Experiments 1a and 1b (female target). In Experiments 2a and 2b the procedure and the measures were exactly the same, with the only difference being that the names and signifiers were substituted as appropriate.

The survey was divided into two parts. In part one (Time1), participants saw a photograph of a woman<sup>13</sup> (see Appendix 9 for photographs) whose name was either Emily or Fatima, and were shown the follow text introducing the target:

*"This is [Emily/Fatima]. She has just moved in next door to you. She knocked on your door to introduce herself and has invited you over for a cup of tea."*

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<sup>13</sup> Photographs were taken of a self-identifying white British female who was recruited through a callout. The first volunteer was selected. Two photographs were taken, one without a hijab (headscarf) and one with a hijab to fit the signifier conditions in the study design. While photographs were not pre-tested, the photographs of the same model were used in Experiment 1a and 1b. For Experiments 2a and 2b, two photographs were taken of the male volunteer who was also recruited through a callout. The callout specified the volunteer would need to have a beard and be willing to shave it. One photograph was taken with a beard and one without. Again, these photographs were not pre-tested, but the same images were used for both experiments.

Participants in the Muslim condition had the sentence, “*She is Muslim*”, included in the text above and they saw a photo of the target with no hijab. Participants in the Hijab condition saw a picture of the target with a head scarf with no additional information being added to the introductory text. Those in the No Signifier condition saw a photograph of the target with no hijab and no additional information was added nor mentioned about the target. Participants were then asked to answer a number of questions (see section 3.6.4 for measures Time1).

In the section part of the survey (Time2), participants were given a second piece of text with the same accompanying photograph they saw at Time1. The vignette read:

*“While talking to [Emily/Fatima] you find out that she defines herself as a white British Muslim”.*

Participants were then required to answer a number of questions (see section 3.6.4 for measures at Time2) and were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that the questions concerned their opinions on the target identity expression. Participants were also encouraged to answer the questions genuinely.

### **3.6.4 Measures**

All measure used a 7-point Likert-scales ranging from ‘1=Not at all’ to ‘7=Extremely’ and the order of items in all the dependent variables were counter balanced. In the write up of study 3 as an empirical paper (see Chapter Six), in order to streamline the focus of the paper, only the analysis of the measures on recognition, distinctiveness threat and

negative affect are discussed. The remaining measures and their analyses are included as supplementary material (see Appendix 10).

**Measures at Time1:**

1. **Manipulation check** required to indicate whether they saw the picture of the target. Answer: Yes/No.
2. **Behavioural intention** was a self-constructed measure and asked how likely they were to accept the target's invitation.
3. **Recognition-Time 1** asked participants to rate the likelihood of four separate items relating to the identity of the target: “[Emily/Fatima] *is British*”, “[Emily/Fatima] *is Muslim*” and “[Emily/Fatima] *is white*” and “[Emily/Fatima] *is English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish*”.
4. **Positive personality traits-Time1** included 10 items (“Trustworthy, friendly, open minded, likeable nice, respectable, interesting, truthful, and deceitful devious – reversed items”) where participants were asked likelihood of these traits being attributed to the target.
5. **Attractiveness** of the target was measured using a one-item scale, “*How attractive do you find [Emily/Fatima]?*”
6. **Similarity to target** was also measured in a similar way, “*How similar do you see yourself to [Emily/Fatima]?*”
7. **Identification to groups** of participants was measured using four one-item scales (Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013), “*being British*”, “*being Muslim*”, “*being English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish*” and “*being white*”
8. **Perceived similarity to groups** of the participants with the average person from each of these social categories (adapted from Leach et al., 2008) was also asked.

### **Measures at Time2:**

1. **Manipulation check** asked participants whether the target identifies herself as a White British Muslim. Answer: Yes/No.
2. **Recognition-Time2** asked participants the extent to which they think that the target can be truly “*British*”, “*white*” and “*Muslim*”.
3. **Negative affect** (“*annoyed, irritated, offended, angry*”) and **positive affect** (“*happy, content, pleased, delighted*”) measured how the target’s statement made participants feel.
4. **Positive personality traits- Time 2** used identical items to Time 1.
5. **Distinctiveness threat** was adapted from (Warner, Hornsey, & Jetten, 2007) and included 5 items, (“*people like [Emily/Fatima] blur the boundaries between White British people and Muslims; threaten the differences between white British people and Muslims; reduce divisions between white British people and Muslims*”, “*People like [Emily/Fatima] who identify as Muslim threaten the integrity of white British people*”, “*People like [Emily/Fatima] who identify as white British make it harder to tell who is Muslim and who is not*”).

### **3.6.5 Analysis**

All the data was analysed in SPSS using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab/Beard, No signifiers) design.

To measure the difference between recognition items Time 1 and Time 2 (i.e., before and after revealing the target’s white British Muslim identity), new variables were created to calculate a mean difference: *Recognition differences* (Recognition difference-white, Recognition difference-Muslim, Recognition difference-white-Muslim). This was done by subtracting recognition-Time2 from recognition-Time1 on each relevant identity (i.e., Muslim and white). To analyse these differences across the conditions as

well as within the conditions, a mixed-design ANOVA was conducted in which white and Muslim recognition differences were entered as a within-subjects factor, and Signifier and Name as between-subjects factors.

A moderation analysis was also conducted using Hayes PROCESS micro (Hayes, 2013) and bootstrapping (5000) to conduct a moderated mediation analyses (model 8). This explored the mediating role of intergroup distinctiveness threat on negative affect.

### **3.7 Chapter summary and final points**

In this chapter I have outlined the methodological framework of the PhD. I have highlighted and justified the different methods and analysis I have used, as well as reflected on and acknowledged my own positionality in relation to the research.

In the subsequent three chapters I discuss each of the studies as independent empirical papers, before discussing the findings collectively in relation to the overarching theoretical framework of the thesis. I will also outline the contributions this research makes and suggest future directions to be considered.

## Chapter Four: Preface

This chapter makes up the first empirical paper of the thesis and aims to provide an understanding of the context in which white British Muslim identities are experienced, managed and negotiated. It draws on Social Representations Theory to consider how knowledge about identity groups and their 'fit' with each other are discursively constructed, perpetuated and challenged. Specifically, it focuses on how constructions of threat framed through identity categories and their meaning were discursively emphasised or contested in mainstream British and British Muslim newspapers. This chapter sheds light on the complex and contradictory ways in which white British Muslims are represented within the British context in relation to notions of threat. This often depended on *who* was doing the representing, thus highlighting that who the relevant other is within a given context becomes important in understanding processes of identification and multiple identity compatibility. For as this chapter demonstrates, notions of threat and perceptions of identity compatibility are intertwined, influencing and shaping discursive constructions of belonging.

Chapter Four was published as a co-authored journal article with Dr Caroline Howarth (LSE) in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* in 2018.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Amer, A. & Howarth, C. S. (2018). Constructing and contesting threat: Representations of white British Muslims across British national and Muslim newspapers. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 48 (5), pp. 614-628.

# **Chapter Four: Constructing and contesting threat: Representations of white British Muslims across British national and Muslim newspapers**

## **Abstract**

White British Muslims pose a challenge to racialised representations of British Muslims as non-white, foreign and ‘other’. By drawing on tools from Critical Discourse Analysis to develop Social Representations Theory on a micro-analytic level and making connections with other relevant social psychological theories on intergroup relations, this paper examines the constructions of white British Muslims as a threat in six national and two Muslim British newspapers. It looks at how discourses are used to create, perpetuate and challenge the ‘hegemonisation’ of social representations in majority and minority press. The findings show that white British Muslims are portrayed as a threat not just in spite of, but because of their position as part of the ‘white British’ ingroup. Consequently, the threat they pose often leads to their Muslimness being emphasised. This was, at times, contested however, either through direct challenges, or by making the threat ambivalent by drawing on their whiteness.

**Keywords:** Threat, white British Muslims, social representations, critical discourse analysis, media, power.

## Introduction

According to the 2011 Census there were 216,603 ethnically white Muslims in England, Scotland and Wales, 36% of whom identified as ‘white British’ (National Records of Scotland, 2011; Office for National Statistics, 2011). Of this percentage, some were undoubtedly converts to Islam while others were ‘born’ Muslims.<sup>15</sup> It is through the lens of conversion, however, that the media has often understood and contextualised the presence of white British Muslims in British society. While often presented as a relatively new phenomenon, conversion to Islam and the existence of ethnically white British Muslims has in fact a long history in Britain. Some of the earliest recorded cases of conversion date back to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (Matar, 1998) and, after a number of high profile conversions by aristocratic and influential individuals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the *Daily Mirror* expressed apprehension at “the lure of Eastern religions...affecting an increasing number of Europeans” (*Daily Mirror*, 17<sup>th</sup> November 1913).

### White British Muslims, converts and the media

This study sets out to explore the representation of white British Muslims in both national newspapers as well as Muslim newspapers, offering an original and valuable contribution to existing literature. Very few studies have interrogated mainstream British press and its portrayal of Muslim converts (Brice, 2011; Poole, 2011, 2002), and there have been no studies on this topic with regards to white converts specifically, and none looking at how converts are portrayed in the Muslim media. The research that does

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<sup>15</sup> Those ‘born’ Muslims were likely to be descendants of white British individuals who had converted to Islam previously. It is possible that this may also include white Muslims who were descendants of individuals from countries in, for example, the Balkan regions (e.g. Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia). Nevertheless it is important to note that people from countries such as these often identified as “other white” (Vaos, 2013) therefore it is unlikely that they made up a large proportion of those who categorised themselves as “white British”.

exist shows that Muslim converts are often discussed either in relation to terrorism or as posing a threat demographically, socially and/or culturally (Brice, 2011; Poole, 2011, 2002). This is not dissimilar to research of media portrayals of Muslims more generally (e.g. Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Law, Sayyid, & Sian, 2013; Poole, 2011, 2002). Interestingly, however, Brice (2011) found that 62% of newspaper stories about Muslim converts linked them with terrorism, a substantial rise from 36% when looking at coverage of British Muslims overall (Moore, Mason, & Lewis, 2008). Thus, he argues that British newspapers present converts as a greater threat to security in comparison to other British Muslims. However, he does not attempt to explore why and whether specific ethnic convert groups are portrayed as more dangerous than others. In fact, these studies, while including white British converts in their analysis, do not necessarily consider the ways in which different ethnic convert groups were depicted, nor whether there is a difference in their depiction. Therefore, questions can be posed on whether, in the case of this study, *white* British Muslims are also always positioned as a threat and/or depicted in a negative light. If so, how and why? How is their white ethnicity understood and positioned? Indeed, does it have an impact on the way they are presented? And to what extent does this depiction change, if at all, when looking at their representation in Muslim media?

### **Threat and positioning**

The extent to which we perceive individuals as sharing or threatening ‘our’ beliefs, values and identities effects the ways in which they come to be positioned by us along ingroup-outgroup boundaries. Intergroup threat theory (Stephan & Renfro, 2002), originally integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), emphasises the conditions that result in one group perceiving another as a threat and a source of possible harm. It notes two types of threat, namely, realistic threat and symbolic threat,

the former referring to threats to the power, safety and security of the ingroup, and the latter describing threats to the norms, values, culture and identity of the ingroup. This is closely connected with Social Identity Theory's (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) conceptualisation of the intergroup dynamics, where the perceived or actual threat posed by an outgroup has a direct effect on the self-esteem of the ingroup. Indeed, Social Identity Theory proposes multiple strategies through which individuals and groups deal with threats to their identity including social mobility (attempting to adjust one's identification from a negatively perceived group to a more positive one) and social change (creative ways of evaluating one's identity in a positive way) (Breakwell, 1986). However, the threat described in SIT is assumed to come from 'outside', and thus does not take into account that some threats can come from *within* the ingroup. The Black sheep effect (Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988) can be used to explain how groups cope with this ingroup threat. Marques and his colleagues note that while ingroup members who enforce and assert the group's norms are perceived more positively by the group, deviant ingroup members are perceived *more* negatively than outgroup members. Indeed, Verkuyten (2013) describes how these individuals are likened to 'bad apples' who threaten ingroup norms and status. In the same vein, the subjective group dynamics approach (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000) states that the "subjective validity and legitimacy of in-group norms" are integral to maintaining a positive social identity (p.165). Where these 'norms' are not adhered to, it can lead to the derogation and symbolic expulsion of the threatening individual(s) from the ingroup as a means of maintaining a positive and cohesive identity (see Gonsalkorale & von Hippel, 2011).

Thus, individuals who can be simultaneously positioned as both ingroup and outgroup members, as is the case with white British Muslims, present an informative group through which we can further explore and examine notions of threat and how this

threat is constructed in order to define the lines between ingroups and outgroups. Being ethnically white in the UK places white British Muslims in the dominant ingroup category, yet being Muslim positions them as part of a minoritised and stigmatised group (Amer & Howarth, 2016), which, as we have examined above, is generally perceived to be a threat to British society (Brice, 2011; Poole, 2011, 2002). In the context of the British Muslim community they are positioned as part of a “minority within a minority” (Brice, 2011, p.1) albeit with “marginal status” (LePape, 2003, p.242) within that minority. Thus, white Muslims are at an interesting crossroads of identities (Suleiman, 2013; Zebiri, 2008), the intersection of which influences both how they position and see themselves, and how they are positioned and seen by others. This highlights the complexity of the intersections of being ‘white’ and ‘Muslim’, indicating that a binary approach to exploring identity categorisation through ingroup or outgroup membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) can potentially miss the nuanced ways in which we are all positioned to some extent at a crossroads of complex ingroup and outgroup relations.

A fruitful framework through which to explore identity categorisation is Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1972). Duveen (2001) notes that social representations precede identity, shaping identities which then in turn influences the development of social representations. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, we use SRT to explore the social representations of white British Muslims through the ways in which they are used, and shaped by, discourses in the media. In doing so, we take a more fluid approach towards exploring identity, considering more carefully how categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are continuously managed and maintained through processes of social positioning and representing. We particularly focus on how white British Muslims are represented in national and British Muslim newspapers, examining

the way in which this is done by drawing on tools from critical discourse analysis (CDA; van Dijk, 1988, 1996b) to explore the nature of news reporting.

### **Social representations and discourse**

Social representations are systems of shared knowledge that exist within our social contexts and help us make sense of the world around us (Moscovici, 1972). They are constructed and ratified through processes of negotiation and renegotiation between individuals and groups who are in constant interaction with their environments (Jovchelovitch, 2007). There are different forms of social representations: hegemonic (generally consensually shared and often support the dominant social order, similar to ideologies), emancipated (not yet in opposition to hegemonic representations; constructed from new or different information that only a portion of society has been exposed to) and polemic (not shared by society as a whole and are often generated as a result of social conflict or controversy) (Moscovici, 1988).

Moscovici described two communicative processes as crucial in the generation of a representation; anchoring and objectification (Moscovici, 1988). Anchoring is the process by which meaning is attributed to a new phenomenon, (e.g. objects, relations, experiences, practices, etc.) by comparing it with, and interpreting it based on, existing knowledge, in an attempt to eradicate the threat of the strange and unfamiliar.

Objectification is the process of turning an abstract notion or construct into something more concrete that exists in the physical world, which in turn assists in understanding it. Furthermore, as Höijer (2010) notes, the processes of both anchoring and objectification can also be affixed to familiar emotions, whether negative or positive. As such, “the unknown becomes recognizable as, for example, a threat, a danger, or as something nice and pleasurable” (*ibid*, p.719).

Looking at the process of anchoring and objectification in creating and affirming social representations of white British Muslims in media discourses provides us with insight into the ways in which this group is described, positioned and, as a result, represented on dominant discourses. It is widely recognised that the media is a significant medium of communication through which the dissemination and reproduction of social representations of groups can be studied (Wagner et al., 1999; see Jaspal & Cinnirella, (2010) for an example of this). Research has illustrated how institutions such as mainstream media construct specific hegemonic narratives that influence and have power over socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies (van Dijk, 1996; Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011). This is done by imposing identities onto groups as well as disseminating negative representations of those who have limited social power to challenge such depictions (Howarth, 2002a; Moloney, 2007).

Importantly, the ways in which groups are represented and positioned can at times contradict one another. Inconsistencies and points of opposition are an essential part of everyday representational knowledge and can often coincide harmoniously, a concept Moscovici (2008) referred to as cognitive polyphasia. Nevertheless, where these diverse and often oppositional discourses and representations exist, they can frequently be a reflection of the unequal distribution of power in our societies where ‘tensions’ lead to opportunities for resistance, innovation and transformation (Duveen, 2000). Studies on media production by minority groups have highlighted the importance of alternative channels for counter representations and challenging the hegemony of mainstream media over discourse production. These channels become valuable sites for not only the construction and dissemination of more positive or emancipatory representations for minoritised groups, but also essential for building community

identities and for their opinions and voices to potentially be heard and understood by wider society (Budarick & Han, 2013; Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Husband, 1998).

A more critical approach to SRT specifically acknowledges the need to take note of the role of power in the creation, negotiation, re-presentation and resistance of social representations, turning it into a theory that explicitly incorporates how unequal societies are produced and maintained through the production of ideas (Howarth, 2006b; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Pheonix, Howarth, & Philogène, 2016). Indeed, Jovchelovitch (1997) notes that a key element in understanding the role of power in the creation of knowledge is through noting its reliance of systems of recognition within our contexts. As she states, “some groups lack enough recognition when proposing their representations and ways of life” (p. 21), and as a result, representations held by certain groups take more precedent than others and become embedded within the social context. While acts of resistance do take place, the lack of power to enforce recognition by more marginalised groups make this difficult, as others hold the legitimacy to enforce their own knowledges and world views. Thus, SRT is able to examine how hegemonic representations, on a macro level, are negotiated and contested. However, on the whole, SRT research does not explore how this is done on a micro level and it is here where CDA can provide the tools for a micro-level analysis. Thus, by drawing on aspects of CDA, social representations, as a theory and as a method, can be sharpened and enriched. In this paper, we predominately use CDA as a methodological tool but note that it comes with some key theoretical underpinnings such as power and resistance which resonate with SRT.

### **SRT and CDA: a more integrated approach**

Gibson (2015) notes in his analysis of the connections between social representations and discourse that discursive approaches can provide us with insight into *how* social

representations are used. This in turn enables us to look beyond their content and structural nature, and instead further understand their broader implications, particularly in terms of the operation of power, within different contexts (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). Previous studies have gone some way in complementing SRT with discursive approaches (Gibson, 2015; Howarth, 2011; Jaspal, Nerlich, & Koteyko, 2013; Moloney, Holtz, & Wagner, 2013; Tileagă, 2006, 2013). For example, Jaspal, Nerlich and Koteyko (2013) examined the discursive strategies used by *Daily Mail* readers when commenting on articles about climate change and explored the ways in which they affirm and contest hegemonic and polemic social representations.

CDA is not only the intricate study of talk and text (known as discourse analysis); rather it often goes further by exploring the connections between “discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (van Dijk, 1993, p.249). Like critical approaches to SRT, it acknowledges the role of communication, power and context in shaping our understanding of the world. It does so by systematically exploring:

“often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 135).

CDA is also particularly suitable for examining the media of mass communication such as newspapers, which directly disseminate particular images, discourses and representations to the public and are often controlled by elite power structures in our societies (Fairclough, 1993; van Dijk, 1996a). In emphasising difference, often in favour of the in-group, the mass media ensures the maintenance of existing power structures in favour of majority group interests (Reicher, 2004). These discourses can therefore influence (directly and indirectly) the on-going production of socially shared knowledge. Hence CDA allows us to examine the way in which “specific discourse structures determine specific mental processes, or facilitate the formation of specific social representations” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 259). Nevertheless, it also acknowledges the boundaries of power and therefore is able to take note of the discursive ways in which these social realities can be, and are, resisted, through processes of social change and social creativity (for examples, see Howarth, 2006a; Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, & Howarth, 2012).

### **The present study**

The aim of the present study is to explore how national and Muslim<sup>16</sup> newspapers in the UK socially represent, and thereby position, white British Muslims. Indeed, as white Muslims represent ‘a minority within a minority’ in Britain, their positioning and representation by not only mainstream media, but also Muslim media becomes crucial to explore, allowing this study to make a valuable and original contribution to existing

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<sup>16</sup> The terms ‘national’ and ‘Muslim’ will be used to describe the two groups of newspapers analysed in this paper. While recognising that these terms are problematic in that they perpetuate and echo notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and of inclusion and exclusion there needs to be a meaningful way to distinguish them. These labels refer to the accessibility and indeed the readership of these newspapers. The Muslim newspapers included in this paper are explicitly targeting a Muslim audience and readership through, for example, their names, and where the newspapers are distributed (in mosque, shops in areas of high Muslim populations, community centres, and so forth). On the other hand, ‘national’ newspapers, while perhaps targeting individuals of particular political orientations, can, and are, accessed by all members of the population.

literature on the topic. It does so by drawing on tools from CDA to further develop our understanding of processes through which social representations are used and constructed in discourse. Together they become a powerful force in creating a more holistic understanding of the role that power and positioning play in the creation, use, perpetuation and contestation of social representations.

## **Research design**

### **Sample**

In order to conduct a comprehensive account of national and Muslim news coverage of white British Muslims and to note any possible changes in the coverage over the years we analysed a 25-year period, from January 1990 to December 2014<sup>17</sup>. Six national newspapers, both tabloid and broadsheet, were analysed. These were selected based on circulation rates<sup>18</sup> and political orientation, ensuring that papers from across the political spectrum were included. Two newspapers catering to the Muslim communities in Britain were also analysed and were selected based on circulation rates. Information on the political orientation of these newspapers could not be obtained (see Table 1 for details regarding circulation rates and political orientation).

**Table 1.** Circulation rates of newspapers.

Newspaper	Circulation	Political leaning
The Independent	60,438	Centre-left
The Guardian	178,758	Left-leaning
The Daily Telegraph	486,262 (and 380,922)	Centre-right

<sup>17</sup> One newspaper, The Muslim Weekly has only been in circulation since 2003 and therefore its coverage of white British Muslims was analysed from its establishment up until December 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Figures obtained from Turvill (2015).

(and Sunday Telegraph)		
The Times (and Sunday Times)	397,171 (and 793,517)	Centre-right
The Daily Mail (and the Mail on Sunday)	1,657,867 (and 1,497,855)	Right-leaning
The Mirror	868,992 (and 833,379)	Centre-left
The Muslim News	140,000 <sup>a</sup>	-
The Muslim Weekly	40,000 <sup>b</sup>	-

<sup>a</sup> Figure obtained from Gilliat-Ray (2011). <sup>b</sup> Figure obtained from Werbner (2011).

### ***National newspapers***

National newspaper articles were accessed using the LexisNexis online database which includes articles appearing both online and in print. Ten search terms were used (see Table 2) covering the various ways in which white British Muslims may be referred to in the articles.<sup>19</sup> A total number of 1631 articles were found.

**Table 2.** Search terms and the number of article hits displayed on the LexisNexis online database in descending order.

Search Terms	No. of articles
Muslim / Islam AND British AND white/convert	959
English AND convert AND Islam OR Muslim	254
‘white Muslim’	208
‘white convert’ AND Islam OR Muslim	100
‘English convert’ AND Islam OR Muslim	33

<sup>19</sup> The term ‘revert’ was initially included in the search term list to reflect the, sometimes preferred, use of this term by Muslims. It is based on a particular Islamic religious interpretation that all humans are born Muslim and only as a result of the environment in which they are brought up become affiliated with another or no religion. Thus those who become Muslim later in life are seen as ‘reverting’ to their religion of birth (Köse, 1996; Roald, 2004). However, no relevant articles were brought up by the database and thus it was subsequently removed from the list. ‘Scottish’, ‘Welsh’ and ‘Northern Irish’ were also included in the search term glossary; again, no relevant articles emerged.

‘white British convert’ AND Islam OR Muslim	30
‘white British Muslim’	20
‘white Briton’ AND Islam OR Muslim	17
‘English Muslim’	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1631</b>

SRT and CDA both require a modest number of articles for an in-depth analysis, thus the researchers developed a process of selection to reduce the total number of articles to be analysed from 1631 to a more manageable dataset (161 articles). This process is outlined below:

- 1) By noting the ‘peaks’ (years where there were a greater number of articles on white British Muslims) and ‘troughs’ (years with relatively few articles about white British Muslims) it was decided that the analysis would focus on articles published in the peak years of 1990, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2013, as well as 1992, 1994, 2000, 2007, 2009 and 2011 when there were very few articles published (see figure 1). The latter were incorporated into the analysis to make note of what stories about white British Muslims were deemed newsworthy in a time of ‘relative quiet’ or disinterest.
- 2) The dataset was then filtered to include news articles and editorials only (removing comment/opinion pieces and any items not categorised in news sections). This was because the study focuses on understanding representations of white British Muslims through the language of news reporting. Editorials were included in the data set as they reflect a news outlet’s political orientation and ideological stance, an important aspect in understanding the source of a news text when conducting CDA. An analysis of images accompanying articles

was not conducted as the LexisNexis database does not store any images, photographs or videos imbedded in or printed with the articles.

- 3) An additional process was implemented on the articles published in 2013 due to their significantly higher number compared with other years (451 articles published in 2013 out of a total number of 1631)<sup>20</sup>. These articles were listed chronologically with every fifth article being included for analysis.

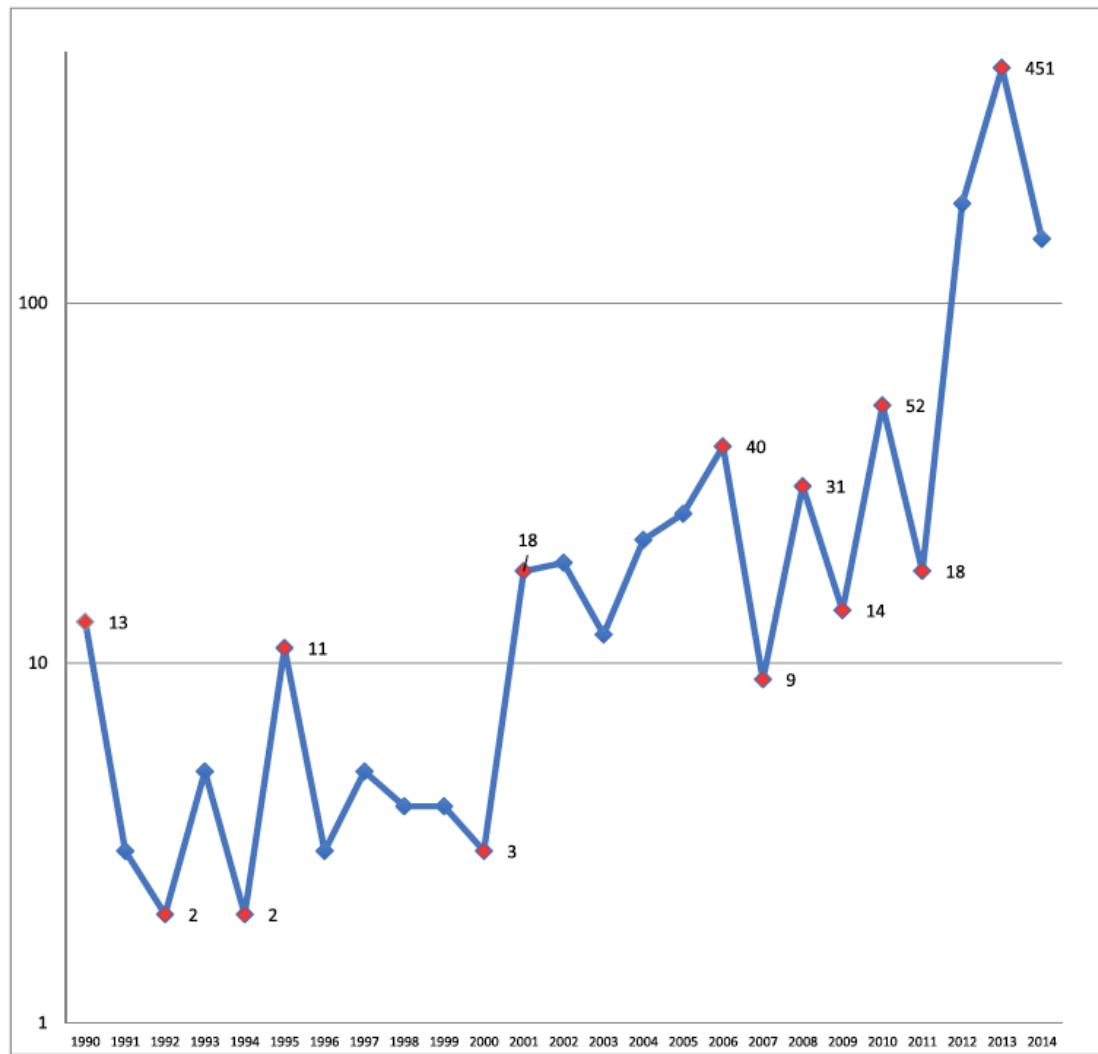
### ***Muslim newspapers***

Past copies of *The Muslim News* and *The Muslim Weekly* were accessed via the British Library Archives as they were not available on LexisNexis. All articles about white British Muslims were collected manually and were scanned for the same ten search terms previously used for the national newspapers and tabloids.

A total of 34 articles were collected (11 articles from *The Muslim News* and 23 from *The Muslim Weekly*) and made up the Muslim newspaper data set for the critical discourse analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> The significantly higher number of articles in 2013 was due to a media frenzy regarding the whereabouts of Samantha Lewthwaite, wife of 7/7 bomber Jermaine Lindsey and her alleged involvement in the Nairobi terror attack. There was also increased focus on 'foreign' fighters, some of whom were converts, joining wars and conflicts taking place in Muslim majority countries such as Syria.



**Figure 1.** Graph of number of articles about white Muslims using a logarithmic scale.

### Analytical procedure

A method of analysis was developed by both researchers based on the integration of elements of CDA into SRT.

Both researchers were aware of the influence of their identities on the interpretations of the data. Indeed, as CDA theorist Norman Fairclough (2003) notes that “There is no such thing as an ‘objective’ analysis of a text, if by that we mean an analysis which simply describes what is ‘there’ in the text without being ‘biased’ by the ‘subjectivity’ of the analyst” (p.14-15), Nevertheless, in order to go some way in increasing the validity of the analytical findings, all the articles were first analysed by

the first author, after which a random selection of articles were also analysed independently by the second author. Points of difference and overlap were discussed in depth and the analytical framework was then developed from these discussions.

The articles were analysed using several analytical categories proposed by van Dijk (2006) (outlined in Table 3). These analytical categories (while not exhaustive) are what allow “the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 729) to be explored and unpacked as they are some of the key elements which determine the construction of a representation. In this way, a CDA approach was not only able to provide its own insights, but also highlighted the discursive ways in which processes of anchoring and objectification identified in SRT were played out in the text. For example, the ‘number game’ is a method of quantification which can be used to objectify abstract constructs, and authority and evidentiality are used as ways of anchoring representations as ‘truth’ claims, forming hegemonic representations or a seemingly solid social fact.

The inclusion of different ‘voices’ within the text was also noted (Fairclough, 1995b), as it enabled for the recognition of the different actors used in articles as sources of information to demonstrate perspectives and interpretations of the subject matter. Furthermore, the researchers took into account the type of newspaper (Muslim newspapers/national newspaper/national tabloid), political orientation of the newspaper, and the title given and by-line of the articles.

A number of different discursive themes emerged across all the newspapers when conducting the analysis, namely, white British Muslims as a threat/not a threat, their conversion as rational/irrational and identity compatibility/incompatibility. However, in order to develop a more in-depth analysis for this paper, we focus on only one of the themes found in the data: the depiction of white British Muslims as a

threat/not a threat. This enables us to explore the way in which white Muslims were positioned in both national and Muslim newspapers in relation to the notion of threat and how this positioning is manipulated in order to further a specific agenda. More broadly, this allows us to examine the complexities of identity threat and its implications on our understanding of identity processes in general.

**Table 3.** Analytical categories for CDA (van Dijk, 2006).

Analytical Categories	Definition
Actor description	The way in which actors are described in discourses and how this reflects in-group and out-group membership.
Authority	The role of authority in argumentation to make specific cases and create ‘truths’.
Evidentiality	Linked to authority in that it is a technique which is used to demonstrate ‘truths’ either through authority or other recognised sources.
Comparison	Method through which imposed group membership is attained.
Generalisation	Broad statements about in-group or out-group usually the former being positive and the later negative.
Number game	The use of numbers and statistics in argumentation.

### Analysis and discussion

Discourses of white British Muslims as a *threat* – be this hypothetical, potential or real – were found in articles in all national newspapers analysed. This was constructed through narratives of white Muslims as a threat to 1) Britain’s national security through

potential or actual connections with terrorism and extremism, 2) British society, demographically, religiously and culturally. Both these narratives reflect the widespread negative coverage of Muslims in Britain more generally (Brice, 2011; Moore et al., 2008; Poole, 2011, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Saeed, 2004). Furthermore, although seemingly separate, these narratives sometimes overlapped as we explore in more detail below.

Articles in British Muslim newspapers, unsurprisingly challenged this narrative of white Muslims as a threat, demonstrating the importance of alternative medias controlled by marginalised groups to disseminate counter representations and discourses (Budarick & Han, 2013; Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Husband, 1998). However, there were also instances where even within national newspapers the notion of white British Muslims as a threat was disrupted, challenged or made ambiguous through a recognition of their connection or membership to the majority white ingroup.

### **Security threat**

White British Muslims in national media were represented as realistic threats with the potential of physically harming the ingroup (Stephan & Renfro, 2002) through the hegemonic representation of Muslims as a threat to security. This threat was often constructed as a direct result of their conversion to Islam, and highlighted skin colour/ethnicity.

In an article from June 2006, *The Times* (07/06/2006) ran a story on Al Qaeda recruiting “white-skinned militants” from Europe and the US who were “*harder for authorities to detect as they cross the world on their missions, including suicide attacks*”. In another article later that year, *The Daily Mail* (21/12/2006) stated that “*fairskinned converts who display no outward sign of their faith can be terrorists*” and thus can easily ‘slip through the net’. Both these examples not only suggest that white

Muslims disrupt the ‘social sorting’ (Lyon, 2003) of surveillance strategies and challenge the dominant racialised representations of Muslims as non-white (Nasar Meer, 2008) but also highlights their ability to ‘pass’ (Lahiri, 2003; Schlossberg, 2001) as non-Muslim and therefore ‘pass’ as non-threatening. Thus, in these instances white Muslims were deemed potentially *more* of a threat on account of their visible “whiteness” and/or invisible ‘otherness’. They unsettle the assumed connections between terrorism and brown bodies (Patel, 2012) and disrupt the very notion of whiteness as an indicator of belonging to the unthreatening ingroup. Thus, they are constructed as an ‘enemy within’. Indeed, various researchers discussed above have explored the different strategies sought when groups are faced with a threat from ‘within’, one of which is deeming these individuals as more threatening than outgroup members (Abrams et al., 2000; Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988; Verkuyten, 2013), as is the case here. However, it is their Muslimness that comes to be emphasised (an example of actor description; van Dijk, 2006), as a means of explaining and contextualising the source of the threat. Our analysis found that in cases where individuals had ‘English-sounding’ names, their names were either prefixed or suffixed with descriptions, positioning them as ‘other’. Examples of this were found in both *The Independent* (11/08/06) which described suspect terrorist Don Stewart-Whyte as “*a white convert to Islam*”, and in *The Daily Telegraph* (23/05/08) which described nail bomber Nicky Reilly as a “*white Muslim convert*”. Devoid of these descriptions, their names could be processed by the reader as ‘invisible’ and ‘normal’ (Wykes, 2013) and may not lead to the conclusion that these individuals are in fact Muslims. However the inclusion of the words ‘*convert Muslim/to Islam*’ provided the context into which the presence of their ‘invisible’, ‘normal’ names as well as their whiteness can be understood. Kilby, (2016) notes that terrorism and terrorists, both abstract constructs, readily come to be objectified and understood in connection with Muslims and Islam. As previous research

has shown, the media specifically connects the Muslim identity with the terrorist identity (for examples see Lazar & Lazar, 2004; Erjavec & Volcic, 2006; Dwyer & Uberoi, 2009; Kilby & Horowitz, 2011) resulting in the representation that ‘terrorists’ are “certain kinds of people” and that “certain kinds of people’ can be known as ‘terrorists’” (Kilby, 2016, p. 242). Thus, the emphasis on the Muslimness of white Muslims is essential to them being positioned in a way that minimises the disruption to social power structures related to group categorisation.

The threat of white Muslims to Britain’s security was not solely contextualised in articles to do with terrorism and extremism, but also emerged in articles regarding the rate of conversion to Islam. In January 2011, a report claiming that the number of converts to Islam in the UK was estimated to have reached 100,000 was published by the think-tank Faith Matters. It garnered a substantial amount of media attention with both tabloids and broadsheet newspapers covering its findings. Interestingly, some national newspapers used the report’s findings to create a causal link between converts, the rise in conversion and the increased threat of terrorism, providing evidence of this through referencing past atrocities committed by Muslim converts, concretising the connection (an example of evidentiality; van Dijk, 2006).

Extract 1: *The Daily Mail*, 05/01/2011

*In 2001, there were an estimated 60,000 Muslim converts in Britain. Since then, the country has seen the spread of violent Islamist extremism and terror plots, including the July 7 bombings. Converts who have turned to terror include Nicky Reilly, who tried to blow up a restaurant in Bristol with a nail bomb, shoe bomber Richard Reid and July 7 bomber Germaine Lindsey. But the report said*

*the number of converts sucked into extremism represented a ‘very small minority’.*

*The Daily Mail* article (Extract 1, lines 3-5) made this causal link through the use of three convert examples (one being a white convert – Nicky Reilly). It further created a connection with the number of converts in Britain in 2001 with subsequent terror atrocities, namely the July 7 bombings, returning to the 7/7 attacks by including Germaine Lindsey as an example of “*converts who have turned to terror*”. This link with an atrocity, that much like 9/11, objectifies the abstract notion of terrorism and allows it to become an easily understandable notion of what terrorism is (Kilby, 2016), renders conversion a serious threat. Unlike with 9/11, the perpetrators of the London bombings were not only ‘home grown’, but included a convert, thus amplifying the anxieties of the threat to security. While the association of converts with extremism was countered by a direct quote from the report (Extract 1), its inclusion was heavily outweighed by the language and preceding sentences dedicated to affirming the association through the factual listing of events which have involved converts, an example of the use of evidentiality (van Dijk, 2006) as a technique in establishing ‘truths’. Indeed, as terrorism comes to be further objectified and understood through the association with Islam and Muslims, the inclusion of statistics about the rise in the Muslim population (numbers game; van Dijk, 2006), be that through conversion or otherwise, fuels the notion of the threat of this group on Britain’s national security.

The Muslim newspapers also covered the Faith Matters report, but contrary to national newspaper coverage, foregrounded the report’s findings that challenged the causal link between conversion and extremism made by national newspapers. *The Muslim Weekly* article ran with the headline: “*Majority 100,000 Muslim converts white*

*females*” (07/01/2011) and the by-line: “*”Converts... involved with terrorism... very small minority” - Faith Matters*”. From the outset, the article stresses that connections with terrorism were limited and situated extremists at the fringes of British Muslim communities. By directly quoting the report and describing them as “*a “very small minority” among an otherwise law abiding majority*”, converts involved in terrorism, some of whom may have been white, were dismissed as illegitimate examples of the Muslim community. In this way, the article attempts to reduce the perceived threat of both Muslim converts specifically, and Muslims more generally. This demonstrates the importance of alternative channels through which marginalised groups can challenge power structures and disseminate alternative discourses and representations, countering dominant depictions of them as a group (Budarick & Han, 2013; Couldry & Dreher, 2007; Husband, 1998). Such discourse can be consequential, developing positive identities in the face of stigma.

The contestation of discourses constructing white Muslims as a threat did not only occur in British Muslim newspapers, however. There were instances, in fact, when this took place in national newspapers too. Coverage of Samantha Lewthwaite, the widow of 7/7 bomber Germaine Lindsay, was an interesting example of this.

*The Guardian* covered a story on Lewthwaite and her connection with the Nairobi Shopping Mall attack with the headline, “*Interpol's most wanted woman: is she a terrorist leader, Scarlet Pimpernel or mother on the run?*” and the by-line “*Don't jump to conclusions over Briton, say experts. Role in mall 'overblown' to cover Kenyan mistakes*” (28/09/2013). Here *The Guardian*'s coverage of the story was much more guarded when compared with the coverage of other papers, e.g. “*Woman who looked like White Widow sprayed machine gun bullets at me*” (headline, *The Daily Mail*, 25/09/2013) or “*White Widow Lewthwaite is a danger to the world, says Interpol; THE*

*NAIROBI MALL MASSACRE*” (headline, *The Telegraph*, 27/09/2013). This could perhaps be explained through it being more of a left-leaning newspaper. *The Guardian* avoided accusatory language, instead developing what could be seen as a more balanced approach. While acknowledging she was “*Interpol's most wanted woman*” the headline posed three potential identity labels that could be attributed to her, thus questioning the extent to which she can be depicted as an explicit threat. Furthermore, the presence of “*experts*” throughout the article (an academic, authorities in Kenya and British anti-terrorist officers) provided *evidentiality* (van Dijk, 2006) in the form of an *authority* (*ibid.*) where the level of threat posed by Lewthwaite was at once challenged and confirmed. What is more significant however is that the identities and involvement of the other alleged attackers was never questioned. Instead the focus of the article attempted to ascertain the identity of the “*white woman amongst the terrorists*” and Lewthwaite’s level of involvement, as we see here:

Extract 2: *The Guardian*, 28/09/2013

*When a number of witnesses described a white woman among the terrorists, was it Samantha Lewthwaite they had seen, the youngest daughter of a British soldier from Aylesbury, the shy, gawky schoolgirl who "all the teachers loved"?*

By specifically referring to her father’s occupation – “*a British soldier*” - attributions of loyalty, patriotism and nationalism were injected into the narrative and become anchored in the identity of Lewthwaite. On the one hand her father’s connection with the British military could challenge the potentiality of her being connected to acts of terrorism. On the other however, this positioning of Lewthwaite could be a method of depicting her alleged involvement in the Nairobi attack as even more shocking by questioning her loyalties by comparing them with those of her father’s. This demonstrates the way in

which discourses can play a significant part in creating representations that are complex and on occasion, contradictory (Billig, 1996; Markova, 2000).

Furthermore, by describing Lewthwaite as “*the shy, gawky schoolgirl* who “*all the teachers loved*”” it drew on characteristics that allude to a positive and innocent image. Indeed, in another example *The Mirror* (22/10/2013) described Lewthwaite as a “*dotting mum*”, gendering her humanisation by attributing her with the stereotypical characteristics of motherhood. Whether this more balanced coverage had any connection to her ethnicity is difficult to say for sure. However, it is important to interpret this in light of the fact that generalisations, accusations and suspicion are often placed upon brown bodies, in this case individuals of Middle Eastern or South Asian appearance and of the Muslim faith, even where little evidence is found, a strategy Norris and Armstrong (1999) term ‘colour-coded suspicion’. In fact, this highlights the power relations at play (Hall, 1997), where due to their in-group membership the status of white Muslims as a threat to security can be negotiated and sometimes challenged.

### **Social and cultural threat**

The representation of white British Muslims as a threat to British society and culture appeared predominantly in articles about conversion to Islam. This is an example of a symbolic threat, where a group is represented as threatening the values, identities and culture of the ingroup (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). Indeed, while we previously saw how statistics were linked with representing white Muslim converts as a threat to security, here we see the use of quantification (van Dijk, 2006) as a strategy in objectifying and explaining the notion of the ‘loss of Britishness’. The extract below is from an article in *The Independent* with the headline “*Islamification of Britain: record numbers embrace Muslim faith*” which included short case studies of individuals who are white and Muslim:

Extract 3: *The Independent*, 04/01/2011

*Previous estimates have placed the number of Muslim converts in the UK at between 14,000 and 25,000. But a new study by the inter-faith think-tank Faith Matters suggests the real figure could be as high as 100,000, with as many as 5,000 new conversions nationwide each year.*

*[...] In all they estimated that there were 60,699 converts living in Britain in 2001. With no new census planned until next year, researchers polled mosques in London to try to calculate how many conversions take place a year. The results gave a figure of 1,400 conversions in the capital in the past 12 months which, when extrapolated nationwide, would mean approximately 5,200 people adopting Islam every year. The figures are comparable with studies in Germany and France which found that there were around 4,000 conversions a year.*

In using words and phrases such as “*Islamification*”, “*record numbers*” “doubled in 10 years”, “*the real figure could be as high as 100,000*” the article created the image of Muslims as a group that, at best, are growing in numbers and, at worst, are attempting to *Islamify* Britain. The language used anchored Islam as the threat to British society and mirrors that of media coverage of minoritised and marginalised groups where they are represented as a growing ‘problem’ (Lynch, 2008). By drawing on comparisons to the rate of conversion in other European countries (see Extract 3) it magnifies the perceived threat of “*Islamification*” as a phenomenon not limited to the UK. Indeed here, the use of the ‘*numbers game*’ in combination with emotive language, factualises, legitimises and objectifies the notion of the threat posed by converts in general, including white Muslims. This strategy is by no means new to the media, and has been used in the past

and undoubtedly will continue to be used in the future to ‘stir up’ and legitimise fear towards certain groups (e.g. refugees (van Dijk, 1997)).

The article in extract 3 above was published in *The Independent*, a broadsheet newspaper often seen as a politically centre-left. However, its coverage of the Faith Matters report differed little to that of *The Daily Mail*, a tabloid often regarded as a right-leaning. *The Daily Mail* article also placed significant emphasis on numbers, the use of negative descriptors to magnify the extent of conversion and dedicated over half the article to statistics (an example of the use of numbers game; van Dijk, 2006). However, the references to white Muslims in *The Daily Mail* article were much more explicit, with the rise in conversion specifically being attributed to young white women accepting Islam (Extract 4 below, lines 1-4 and lines 8-10).

Extract 4: *The Daily Mail*, 05/01/2011

*THE number of Muslim converts in Britain has passed 100,000, fuelled by a surge in young white women adopting the Islamic faith. The figure has almost doubled in ten years with the average convert now a 27-year-old white woman fed up with British consumerism and immorality. The numbers, revealed in a study by multi-faith group Faith Matters, have led to claims that the country is undergoing a process of 'Islamification'.*

*[...] The report estimated around 5,200 men and women have adopted Islam over the past 12 months, including 1,400 in London. Nearly two thirds were women, more than 70 per cent were white and the average age at conversion was 27.*

What is interesting is that the article began by positioning these female converts as almost complicit in the growing threat of Islam and fuelling the “*surge*” in the number of converts to Islam in Britain. The constant emphasis on women draws on notions that a group’s culture and identity is preserved and maintained by women (Mayer, 2002). Thus, the article could be seen as drawing on narratives emphasising the role of white converts (particularly white women) in the gradual dilution of British society and culture and creating an alarmist politics based on threatened identities. Indeed it facilitates a sense of ‘moral panic’ as Islam and its adherents come to be regarded “as a threat to societal values and interests” (Cohen, 1972, p. 9).

The notion of white Muslims and Islam as a symbolic threat is closely tied with, and reflected in, narratives about the incompatibility of Islam or being Muslim with being British (Pickel, 2013). This issue is related to the concepts of loyalty and belonging. While white Muslims can be positioned simultaneously as part of the majority (white) ingroup as well as the minority (Muslim) outgroup (Zebiri, 2008; Neumuller, 2013), they were in fact often positioned by national newspapers firmly in the outgroup by virtue of them having supposedly rejected their old ‘Western’ or ‘British lifestyle’ as a result of their conversion.

Interestingly, across the time-frame analysed, the portrayal of conversion in national newspapers has remained consistent. As Howarth (2011) notes, hegemonic representations change little over time. Indeed, the extract from *The Independent* article below is from 1990 and yet it differs little from recent narratives on conversion, positioning Islam as incompatible with being British.

Extract 5: *The Independent*, 06/01/1990

*Brian Hewitt had decided in 1981 to become one of Britain's 4,000 converts to Islam. He left behind his life as a trombone and tuba player in a Territorial Army band [...] and abandoned his drinking sessions. But life was not easy [...] and changing cultures has not been easy either.*

The extract above suggests that Hewitt's allegiances have shifted on account of his conversion. This notion is cemented in the fact that he not only “*abandoned*” activities considered part and parcel of British culture (e.g. consuming alcohol) but also left the Territorial Army. In fact, the article goes as far as to propose that Islam and British culture are two separate entities that cannot converge on account of Hewitt “*changing cultures*”. Indeed, the subjective group dynamics approach (Abrams et al., 2000) notes that in order for an ingroup to maintain a positive identity, adhesion to certain ways of behaving and thinking are necessary. Here however, Hewitt has deviated from normative behaviours associated with being British and thus is expelled from the group (Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988). In this way the article perpetuates the narrative of Islam as ultimately ‘foreign’ and ‘other’ and reinforces notions of incompatibility through this method of actor description (van Dijk, 2006), reflecting and perpetuating representations that by adopting Islam a person cannot fully retain British culture nor remain truly British (Moosavi, 2002, 2015a).

Muslim newspapers countered this narrative by supporting the fact that “*One can be a confident Muslim and at the same time be a British or Egyptian, Anglo-Saxon or Malay. Geographic nationality, race and language have never proved divisive in Islam*” (*The Muslim Weekly*, 24/10/2003). This is perhaps not particularly an unexpected finding. The majority of British Muslims do not see being British and

Muslim as mutually exclusive (Amer, Howarth & Sen, 2015; Dwyer, 2000; Hopkins, 2011; Modood, 1994). Rather, it is due to negative representations of Islam and Muslims prevalent within British mainstream media and society that have led Muslim communities in Britain to face scrutiny and pressure to prove their allegiance to the nation (Hopkins, 2011; Nandi & Platt, 2013). What is interesting however, is the inclusion of the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in the article. This can be understood as a direct challenge to the ways in which the term has become objectified by far-right organisations and groups to denote the native white race (Goodwin, 2011). It is specific, more so than the term British that has come to encompass people of all different ethnicities, religions and cultures (Mustafa, 2015). Furthermore, it emphatically counters the commonly constructed notion of Muslims being the antithesis of the white ethno-national group.

There were some occasions however when even national newspapers acknowledged the ability to be white, Muslim and British and that being Muslim was not seen as a threat. This was often the case when white British Muslims espoused views critical of other British Muslim communities and talked or alluded to their threat to the maintenance of British culture and the upholding certain values. An example of this can be seen in *The Daily Telegraph* (31/03/2010), which positioned Gai Eaton, a prominent white British convert, in opposition to other British Muslims.

Extract 6: *The Daily Telegraph*, 31/03/2010

*Eaton spent 22 years at the centre [Islamic Cultural Centre, London], surviving the radicalisation of many younger members of the congregation. This was all the more remarkable given the intellectual honesty that led him to disagree with mainstream British Muslim opinion on many issues [...] Eaton decried the*

*despots and human rights abuses in the Muslim world, and, closer to home, held a hard line on Muslim immigrants: "It is time for the Muslims in Britain to settle down, to find their own way, to form a real community and to discover a specifically British way of living Islam," he noted. "The constant arrival of uneducated, non English-speaking immigrants from the subcontinent makes that more difficult. This is no curry island."*

In noting his '*intellectual honesty*' he is positioned as someone who is not afraid to speak the '*truth*' even if this sets him against the majority of his fellow British Muslims. By criticising non-white, '*immigrant*', predominately South Asian Muslim communities in Britain, Eaton simultaneously positions himself, through strategies of positive self-presentation (Engel & Wodak, 2013; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; van Dijk, 1993), and is positioned in this article, as closer to the non-Muslim in-group. Nevertheless, in this instance, his Muslimness also plays a significant role. Whereas elsewhere in the analysis we have seen how Muslimness is used as a means of contextualising the threat white British Muslims pose, here it is what gives Eaton authority and credibility to perpetuate the notion of *other* Muslims posing a threat to society and its cohesion. In turn, this distances him from this threat and subsequently positions him as more closely aligned with the views of the majority population. This demonstrates the complex ways in which social representations, ways of positioning and notions of threat serve as managing functions of identity categorisation. Indeed, different voices are rarely given equal claim to space (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Hall, 1992). Here, Eaton is given a platform because he is able to position himself and be positioned in alignment with those who hold power and who are in control of the dominant representations that are circulated.

National newspapers were not alone in positioning white British Muslim in a more positive light, and less of a threat, in comparison to non-white Muslims. In fact, Muslim newspapers often portrayed white Muslims as the ultimate bridge-makers between Muslims and wider British society and as individuals who have the potential to counter notions of Muslims and Islam as a threat.

Extract 7: *The Muslim Weekly*, 11/11/2011

*There is growing recognition among community leaders that the latest generation of female converts has a vital role to play in fostering dialogue between an increasingly secular British majority and a minority religion, as misunderstood as it is vilified.*

Extract 7, from an article covering the Faith Matters report on converts to Islam, shows how the article posited female converts (75% of whom, it notes, were white) as straddling both British and Muslim communities and thus were presented as potential negotiators and eventual ‘saviours’ in changing dominant perceptions of Islam and the Muslim communities as a threat. In doing so, however, the article reinforces the notion of non-white British Muslims as outsiders, as the ‘real other’, set apart from British society. It also implies that white converts by virtue of their true ‘Britishness’ and real understanding of British society (having truly been a part of it), are required to assist as intermediaries so that non-white Muslims can be understood by British society. Thus, inadvertently perhaps, it perpetuates the very notions Muslim newspapers often try to counter in their articles.

The focus on female, as opposed to male, converts for the “*vital role to play in fostering dialogue*” is particularly interesting. Earlier in the article it stated that “*despite*

*Western portraits [sic] of Islam casting it as oppressive to women, a quarter of female converts were attracted to the religion precisely because of the status it affords them”.*

Thus, it attempts to counter and falsify the specific negative representation of Islam as repressive and threatening to women by suggesting that the very reason these women adopted Islam was as a means of elevating and empowering themselves.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has contributed to existing research on media portrayal of British Muslims by exploring the ways in which national and British Muslim newspapers create, use, reinforce and challenge representations of white British Muslims as a threat to wider society. While a comparison with the coverage of other ethnic groups within wider Muslim communities would have proved an interesting, and no doubt informative comparison, it was outside the scope of this current research. Nevertheless, this paper has made some important inroads into understanding the fluid ways in which white British Muslims are positioned within media discourses, and the various functions these positionings serve.

We have shown how social representations of white British Muslims in national newspapers were predominantly negative, often positioning them as both a realistic and symbolic threat; not unrelated to the way in which Muslims are generally portrayed and discussed in the media (Poole, 2002, 2011; Richardson, 2004; Saeed, 2004; Moore, Mason, & Lewis, 2008; Brice, 2011). However, white Muslims were at times seen as more of a threat than other Muslims because of their white ethnicity, which positioned them as a threat from ‘within’. This demonstrates that notions of threat and outgroup do not necessarily go hand in hand, as is often assumed or implied and white Muslims

serve as a fascinating example through which we are able to explore the complexities and nuanced strategies which are undertaken when positioning groups as a threat. Indeed, as we have shown in this paper, where white Muslims posed a realistic or symbolic threat, their Muslimness came to be heavily emphasised, explaining and contextualising the threat they presented. As existing intergroup theories have stated (e.g. black sheep effect and subjective group dynamics approach), such an approach enables a certain amount of distancing of the threatened in-group from its ‘deviants’, and in this specific case, allows the white ingroup to maintain its position as an unthreatening.

Unsurprisingly, challenges to these notions of threat were predominantly found in British Muslim newspapers, which systematically countered negative representations of Muslims found in national media. However, such polemic or contestatory representations were also found, if to a lesser extent, in national newspaper articles. This reveals the complexity of the narratives produced around white British Muslims and how they were positioned and made sense of within the articles analysed. As Billig (1996) notes, contradiction is a central component of social thought, communication, argumentation, representation and even ideology. This reflects the intricate way in which language and communication are used to create, negotiate, challenge and ratify dominant, hegemonic, representations, to maintain, as well as unsettle, relations of power. Thus, we demonstrate that binary approaches to understanding identity and positioning through ingroup-outgroup dichotomies, notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and understandings of threat and non-threats, would be to ignore the complex and intricate ways in which identities are constructed and understood. However, these counter representations in the national press were often formed in relation to a very specific agenda. In some of these cases the whiteness of white British Muslims was used to

alleviate the potential threat they posed. In other instances, however, their whiteness paired with their Muslimness was used to legitimise the further ‘othering’ of non-white Muslims, reinforcing dominant negative representations of them as a clear threat to society. Once again demonstrating how positioning can be used and identity categorisation can be manipulated by dominant groups to further specific narratives and maintain narratives of threat and difference.

This study has implications for today’s world in exploring constructed systems of fear through *what* and *who* is understood as a threat. Bridging a micro level exploration of how social representations are constructed and used in text with macro constructs such as the dynamics of power allowed us to go some way in showing how discourses of threat construct, perpetuate and challenge hegemonic representations. While the paper does not explore how hegemonic representations, discourses of threat and their contestations are received across society explicitly (there is already some research on this, e.g. Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008; Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2007), or the effects of these on the identities of white British Muslims (Amer, 2017), it does reveal the ways in which constructions of threat are created and maintained in majority- and minority-led media. This highlights how the media’s hegemony on information and knowledge perpetuates and legitimises what comes to be known as ‘truth’ within wider society. Indeed, dominant representations of marginalised groups are enforced by those with access and power in the social construction of knowledge (Hall, 1992; Howarth, 2006; van Dijk, 1996), maintaining the existing power structures that impose divisions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, perpetuating prejudice and discrimination, hostility and conflict.

Thus, it is vital to examine the ways in which the majority-run press as well as alternative/minority media channels can go some way in challenging dominant negative representations and constructing and disseminating alternative narratives. Yet even here, we see how, at times and perhaps inadvertently, white British Muslims are positioned on the periphery of Muslim communities, and are depicted as a group who have more in common with the dominant ingroup than the often-stigmatised outgroup, perpetuating the notion of non-white Muslims as on the margins of British society. Thus, we must consider the broader implications this could have on the future of our societies, where the lines of difference, of ‘us’ and ‘them’, of ingroup or outgroup positioning and belonging, have the capacity to expand and shrink, exclude and include at will.

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## Chapter Five: Preface

Chapter Five leads off from the findings of the previous paper (Chapter Four) to discuss the second empirical paper of the thesis. It shifts the focus from broader contextual representations of white British Muslims, to the experiences of white British Muslims themselves in relation to their multiple identities within this context. This chapter highlights how the multiple identity categories of white British Muslims interact and intersect influencing the extent to which they perceived to be recognised or indeed *not* recognised by relevant others. In turn, such experiences shape the way in which white British Muslims negotiate and manage their multiple identities through performative means in an attempt to take back a sense of control over how their identities are seen on their own terms. Thus, this chapter draws on the concept of recognition (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and connects it with the notion of identity performance (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007), and positions them both as central to an understanding how processes of identification play out in relation to their multiplicity, intersections and interactions in context.

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# **Chapter Five: Between recognition and mis/nonrecognition: Strategies of negotiating and performing identities among white Muslims in the UK**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores white British Muslim experiences of, and strategic performative responses to, the (mis/non)recognition of their seemingly incompatible religious and ethnic identities. Based on in-depth interviews (N=26), it highlights how the different identity categories they hold relate to one another, influencing processes of perceived recognition in interactional contexts. White British Muslims perceive their ethnic and religious identities to be (mis/not) recognised in complex and contradictory ways. Their identities are affirmed, denied, erased and/or incorrectly ascribed, sometimes simultaneously, by relevant others in different contexts. Performative strategies such as the adoption, maintenance or removal of identity markers are used consciously and agentically in attempts to take back control over how their identities are (mis/not) recognised. At times deliberate performative acts leading to misrecognition are orchestrated by white Muslims themselves to not only minimise the risk of experiencing possible harm or marginalisation but also to transgress and challenge norms. They also assert their multiple identities as a response to (mis/non)recognition and claims of their identities being incompatible, regardless of the repercussions that may result in them being placed at the margins of, or excluded from, their ingroups.

**Keywords:** identity recognition, social identity, white British Muslims, agency, power, interactional contexts

## Introduction

Much research in social and political psychology demonstrates that our identities are dynamic and dialogical. Far from being merely static constructs which exist within ourselves, they are negotiated and contested in our interactions with others as we move across contexts. The role of others in processes of identity has long been acknowledged, demonstrating the integral part they play in our self-actualisation and in validating (or invalidating) our belonging to groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Consequently, how we are seen by others, or perhaps more specifically how we *think* we are seen and what identities we *think* are recognised or not recognised, influences how we come to understand ourselves in relation to the categories to which we belong. While the concept of recognition has not been explicitly incorporated into psychological theorisation of identity, research has acknowledged the important role that recognition plays in our identity construction, negotiation and performance (Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher, 2012; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

This paper adds to this existing research and explores the concept of recognition and in turn, identity negotiation through performance, in the identity processes and practices of white British Muslims. Being ethnically white British (part of a socially dominant ingroup) and Muslim (part of a socially marginalised and racialised outgroup), they are an informative group through which to explore perceived recognition, particularly in relation to understanding how interactional contexts are consequential for the recognition of seemingly incompatible identities (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Moosavi, 2015a). Furthermore, this paper examines the performative strategies employed to influence and establish a sense of control over how one is seen/identified by others. By drawing out these issues it highlights the interplay of

recognition and performance in the management of identities in different contexts, further enhancing our theorisation and understanding of social identity processes.

### **Recognition and social identity**

The extensive work of Henri Tajfel, John Turner and their colleagues (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) on social identity and self-categorisation (combined to form the Social Identity Approach; Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010) argues that we see ourselves and others as individuals as well as members of groups. They stress the dialogical nature of identities, where self-other dynamics are central to validating, and therefore recognising, one's claims to a positive self-concept. Salient attributes which allude to specific social categories become significant to these processes (Reicher et al., 2010). Thus, we see how recognition, defined by Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) as the affirmation of one's identity by others, becomes important for understanding and theorising identity. Moreover, where racialised or stereotyped assumptions are made about one's identity category (misrecognition) or where identities are actively denied and erased by others (referred to in this paper as nonrecognition), we see the very real effects of these processes on the self and feelings of belonging (Blackwood et al., 2013).

Concepts related to identity recognition have been explored by a number of researchers in different ways. Some have explored this through the concepts of ascribed and acquired identities (e.g. Pehrson & Green, 2010; Zlatanović, 2017), others in relation to miscategorisation (Wang, Minervino, & Cheryan, 2013), and others still talk of voluntary and involuntary identities (Meer, 2008). As Taylor (1994) notes:

“our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.” (p.25).

Research has demonstrated the negative effects of one’s identity not being recognised by others (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Blackwood et al., 2013). Such examinations of recognition are particularly interesting among individuals who bridge seemingly ‘incompatible’ or conflicting groups e.g. British Muslims (Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2015) or gay religious men (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014). For indeed, experiences of (mis/non)recognition are related to dominant assumptions and understandings by others of which identities ‘fit’ or do not ‘fit’ together. While how one’s identities are seen and affirmed by others is important, just as crucial are meta-perceptions - how one *thinks* other people see them (Blackwood et al., 2015).<sup>22</sup> In a similar vein, Howarth (2002) argues that it is not only how we think others see us that matters, but *who* these others are, and their ability (or power) to make their representations dominant in society. Indeed, psychological groups that are able to exert influence and control over others, also hold the ability to affect our social worlds which can be hard to resist and change (Hall, 1997; Reicher, 2016; Turner, 2005). However, this does not erase opportunities for contestation and resistance to occur in attempts to challenge which identities become recognised by others. A significant part of this

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<sup>22</sup> Although it is important to note that this is often derived from a general perception of the existing dominant representations of one’s group, therefore not necessarily inaccurate.

involves the performance of identities as a strategy for identity negotiation (Butler, 1990; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Schlossberg, 2001). For example, where one's belonging to a group is perceived to be questioned or doubted, individuals may present themselves strategically to legitimise and emphasise their membership where possible (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Wang et al., 2013). The next section will further draw on literature on the performance of identity to expand our understanding of its role in processes of identity recognition and the everyday practice of our identities.

### **Identity performance: the interconnections of power, agency and interactional contexts**

When our identities are not recognised, denied by others, or perceived as such, we can experience a threat to our sense of self (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As a result, we draw upon identity presentation and performance strategies (modes of communicative acts such as verbalisations, adopting symbols and signs, for example, in dress) to try to influence identity recognition. Klein, Spears, and Reicher (2007) define performing identity as "the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviours relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity" (p.30). This emphasis on intention is key to the definition, where any behaviours or performative acts that are not deliberately enacted with the purpose of asserting belonging to a social group are excluded from their conceptualisation of performative strategies. An example of identity performance can be seen in Jaspal and Cinnirella's (2014) study on British Pakistani Muslim gay men which highlights their participation in fasting during Ramadan as an opportunity to assert, legitimise and safe-guard their Muslim identities within Muslim contexts, where their membership is threatened by their sexual identities. Insights from research on meta-perceptions also becomes relevant here. The evaluative component of meta-perceptions – how one thinks one is viewed by others – can instigate particular

presentation strategies in a given interactional context (Blackwood et al., 2015; Vorauer et al., 2000). Where mis/nonrecognition is anticipated, performative strategies can be employed to try to assert one's claim to a group in the hope of being recognised. However, such performative strategies are very much an interaction between those attempting to influence their identity recognition and those who can either accept or deny it, emphasising the power dynamics at play. What is more, socially salient identities such as race, gender, and even religion in some cases, may supersede the desired recognition of other identities – and can be particularly problematic where these categories can lead to negative experiences, stigma and stereotyping. In such instances, Khanna and Johnson (2010) argue that strategic 'identity work' such as 'accenting' – the act of highlighting relevant non-stigmatised identities within a particular context – is required to attempt to influence the recognition of these less visible identities. Thus, meta-perceptions provide a guiding frame for modifying, adapting or emphasising certain behaviours and actions, bringing to the fore the interconnections between recognition and identity performance in processes of identity production.

Deliberate acts leading to certain identities not being recognised can also, where possible, be consciously orchestrated and enacted through performance strategies such as verbal identification (or disidentification), or the selective disclosure (or nondisclosure) of various identity categories one holds (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). In doing so, one may be able to downplay aspects of one's identity in an attempt to be more accepted in another group to which they belong, particularly where these groups are seen as incompatible (Blackwood et al., 2015). Importantly however, these performative acts should not be interpreted as attempts to erase or lie about one's identity multiplicity. As Blocker (1999), states, such acts "are not the function of the kind of artifice or masking that implies a hidden 'real' self" (p. 25). They are instead

attempts at the “creation and establishment of an alternative set of narratives... creating new stories out of unusable ones” (Schlossberg, 2001, p. 4).

While the power dynamics between those being recognised and those doing the recognising are important to consider, the context in which identities are recognised and how these identities relate to one another within these contexts must also be noted. Our identities do not exist apart from one another, and neither do our experiences of the world play through one identity alone. Therefore we cannot, and should not, study them in isolation reducing identity to single and independent entities (Crenshaw, 1991). The ways in which identities interact and collectively influence our experience must be the lens through which we explore identity processes. Furthermore, in acknowledging the interactional context in which identity recognition and performance plays out we are also able to note how these processes are embedded within social, historical and political structures of power. For indeed, all identity categories are associated with some form of power relations (Brah & Phoenix, 2004), which inevitably influence how identities are experienced and understood by the self and others.

In the next section, the focus turns to the exploration of identity recognition and performance through the interactional experiences of white Muslims in the UK. I begin by providing some context as to why white Muslims make for a particularly informative group through which to study these issues, before outlining the methodological design of this study.

### **The current paper: white Muslims in Britain**

What is seen above is that while literature on recognition (including perceived recognition) and performance in relation to identity processes exists, psychological theories of identity do not explicitly draw all of these strands together and acknowledge

the critical role they play in identity processes. The current article attempts to go some way in demonstrating how these issues (recognition, perceived recognition and performance) interlink and are at the forefront of identity negotiation. It does so through a study on white Muslim identities in the British context.

Muslims make up 8% of Muslims<sup>23</sup>, 36% of whom identified specifically as ‘white British’ (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Many of these are converts to the religion, although some are also inevitably ‘born into’ the religion, being descendants of white British people who had converted to Islam (Amer & Howarth, 2018).<sup>24</sup> White Muslims have been described as a “minority within a minority” (Brice, 2011), a group with a unique set of experiences and challenges, despite sharing some of these experiences with other Muslims. They do so within a context which heavily racialises Muslims as ‘brown’ and the racialised ‘other’ and marginalises them due to the alleged threats they pose, both in relation to British (and Western) culture and national (and international) security (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Nasar Meer, 2013; Moosavi, 2002, 2015a; Phillips, 2006). Furthermore, the intersections of religion and gender, where markers of Islam are often much more salient for women through the wearing of the *hijab* (headscarf) for example, adds another dimension to experiences of recognition within this context (Amer & Howarth, 2016; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013).

While a significant amount of literature exists on British Muslim identities in the UK context, little has been conducted on ethnically white Muslims. Being both white and Muslim, their identities are often perceived as incompatible or at the very least, an

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<sup>23</sup> Muslims make up 4.8% of population in England and Wales (Office of National Statistics, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> We are able to make this assertion due to the fact that most individuals who may also be considered ‘white Muslims’ such as those who are descendants of people from the Balkans for example, where there is a history of Islam and Muslim communities, often identify as ‘other white’ (Vaos, 2013) thus it is unlikely that a large proportion would be a part of the ‘white British’ category here.

unlikely combination (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Nasar Meer, 2013; Moosavi, 2015a).

Thus, the nuances of straddling both a dominant ingroup and a minority outgroup (as well as acknowledging the interconnections with gender) provide an interesting frame through which to examine multiple and complex identities in experiences of recognition and belonging. In addition, exploring the performative strategies undertaken by such a group in relation to recognition can highlight the significance of power and agency to this process. Thus, the current study explores the following research question: *How do white Muslims perceive their identities to be recognised in different interactional contexts and how do they manage their various identity performance strategies as a result?*

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Twenty-six self-identifying white British Muslims participated in the study (11 females, 15 males, ages 24–78 [ $M=45$ ]). All bar one participant had converted to Islam. The one non-convert was brought up Muslim, her parents having converted to Islam prior to her birth. Those who had converted did so at various stages in their lives (e.g. as teenagers, at university, later in life) and had been Muslim for at least four years at the time of the interview.

Participants were recruited via a call-out on social media and through snowballing. All participants were given pseudonyms. Those with English names were given English pseudonyms and those with Arabic/Islamic names were given Arabic/Islamic pseudonyms.

### **Data collection**

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and explored themes relating to self-identification, the practice and visibility of identity and perceived identification by others. Interviews were conducted across England (Birmingham, Colchester, Dover, Gloucester, Leeds, London, Luton, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Wolverhampton) and Wales (Cardiff). They lasted between 70-180 minutes (M=118 minutes), were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Analytical method**

The interviews were analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A codebook was generated after the analysis of ten interviews which was then applied to the remaining interviews. As these interviews were coded, relevant modifications were made to the codebook which, upon completion of the analysis, consisted of twenty-three codes, eight themes and two overarching global themes. Four interviews were double-coded by another researcher and any discrepancies were discussed with adjustments made to the coding framework.

A Thematic Analysis was selected for its ability to allow researchers to organise and identify patterns and inconsistencies in the data that aid in answering the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that it is important to acknowledge the active role of the researcher in identifying and sorting out the patterns, commonalities and inconsistencies across the interview transcripts. Themes do not simply residing in the data but are consciously selected and emphasised by the researcher because they “capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). Furthermore, research is not conducted in a vacuum, thus it is important that the researcher acknowledges coding as decisions rooted in theoretical and

epistemological perspectives. In the next section, I discuss this in relation to my own identity.

### **Reflexivity: situating the researcher**

It is crucial that researchers are open and aware of their identities and positionalities when conducting research and how this can influence both the data collection and its interpretation (Howarth, 2002b). Having conducted the interviews myself, participants were often curious about my own identity and my personal connections to the research. Wearing the *hijab* makes my Muslimness obvious, yet my mixed ethnic heritage (white-European and Arab) is less evident and am often positioned as fully Arab/Middle Eastern. Finding out my mother is a white Muslim put many participants at ease believing that I would understand and appreciate the complexities of their experiences. Bhopal (2010) notes that personal experiences and ‘presentation of self’ are important components of the researcher-participant dynamic. Indeed, sameness between researcher and participant does not by any means weaken the strength of the analysis (Phoenix, 1994). Rather, it can enable importance to be attributed to parts of the data which may otherwise be overlooked.

While I can understand participant experiences to some extent, my identity as a researcher needs to be acknowledged, and as Phoenix (1994) highlights, the differences and power imbalances between the researcher-participant relationship remained.

### **Results and discussion**

All participants discussed experiencing identity recognition (affirmation by others), misrecognition (racialised and stereotyped assumptions being made) and nonrecognition (active denial and erasure). The contexts in which these processes took place, which identities were pertinent within the contexts and who the relevant others were, played a

crucial role in these experiences, highlighting the interconnections and perceived tensions between religious identity, ethnic identity and space.

Many participants expressed feelings of being placed at the periphery (consciously or otherwise), or excluded entirely, from particular identity groups they considered themselves a part of. Participants shared how they strategically performed their identities in different, context-specific ways. These intentional behaviours served as attempts to regain a sense of control over how they perceive themselves to be recognised by others. Interestingly, the two contexts in which identity recognition became relevant for participants were either made up of predominantly white non-Muslims or heritage (non-white) Muslims. Contexts that were more mixed (i.e. both Muslim and white non-Muslim) were not discussed, suggesting the significance of identity norms, assumptions and expectations that can exist within more identity homogenous spaces on experiences of recognition.

Below, two global themes are discussed; 1) *The cost and value of identity recognition*, exploring the experience of perceived (mis/non)recognition and the interaction of identities in context and 2) *Identity presentation: transgression, assertion and avoiding group exclusion*, highlighting the identity performative strategies employed to influence their experiences of recognition.

### **The cost and value of identity recognition**

#### ***The cost of recognition as Muslim: nonrecognition of whiteness, misrecognition as not white and the effects on cultural identity***

In perceiving to have their Muslim identities recognised, interviewees discussed how this had consequences for recognition of their ethnic and cultural identities. At times, this was described in relation to reactions of members of their white majority ingroup, particularly family and friends in response to their conversion. Participants felt their

conversion is understood as not only a change of religion and/or ideology, but also a change in ethnic and cultural identity and belonging.

Extract 1: Jessica

*“When I converted people kind of couldn’t believe it, I faced a lot of backlash, some family members and friends really struggled with it, they sort of felt I was no longer one of them, as though I’d given up my culture and were expecting me to start acting Asian, even with food and things like that”.*

In her experience, Jessica’s ethnic identity as white British had been erased by others as a result of her conversion and was replaced with the projection of an ‘Asian’ cultural identity. This active nonrecognition of her whiteness reflects the prism through which Islam and Muslims are often viewed by many white majority groups – that is as foreign, other, and incompatible with what it means to be white and British (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Moosavi, 2015a). Moreover, within the context of ‘othering’ Islam as non-British, the act of becoming Muslim brings to the fore socially and politically embedded notions of whiteness and nationalism as being rooted in Christianity (Amer & Howarth, 2016; Phillips, 2006). It becomes an ‘either/or’ scenario, where being recognised as white British is contingent upon one not being Muslim. Thus, being white British *and* Muslim, becomes an impossibility, resulting in white Muslims’ cultural and ethnic identity being consciously stripped away in this act of nonrecognition. This is highlighted further in a quote from Mustafa, who recalls his friend’s reaction to his conversion: *“He couldn’t understand, he literally said: You ain’t white no more, how can you be?”*. Indeed, literature on the racialisation of Islam demonstrates how Islam is seen as a religion that is for, and made up of, ‘brown bodies’ (predominantly people of

South Asian or Arab heritage) and the extent to which this has consequences on those concerned in relation to their experiences of belonging (Meer, 2013; Wykes, 2013).

This is seen again in extract 2.

Extract 2: Katherine

*“I was lost in Cheltenham and I couldn’t figure out where I was going, and I clearly looked lost because this woman, probably in her 40s, she stopped and asked me really slowly whether I was OK and put her thumbs up. I told her the place I was looking for. She looked surprised and told me that I spoke really good English. I was like “I am English” and she was like “Oh, I thought you were foreign because of the scarf on your head”. She wasn’t rude, but she just assumed I wasn’t English because of the hijab.”*

This quote from Katherine sheds light on how visible markers of one’s religious identity play a significant role in the misrecognition of racial and ethnic identity by non-Muslims, as a result of dominant racialised representations of Islam and Muslims (Moosavi, 2015a; Özyürek, 2015). Echoing the findings of Garner and Selod (2015) on the consequences of racialisation, the presence of the *hijab* drew attention to Katherine’s Muslim identity rendering her “*foreign*” both ethnically, by eliminating any possibility of her Englishness (and her whiteness), and culturally through surprise in her ability to speak English.

Similar scenarios were recounted by a number of female participants who choose to wear the *hijab*, demonstrating how, in the case of adopting a religious marker

(e.g. wearing the *hijab*, the *niqab*<sup>25</sup> or the *abayah*<sup>26</sup>), gender intersects prominently with the experiences of religious, cultural and ethnic identity recognition or mis/nonrecognition among white Muslims women (Brah & Phoenix 2004). Interestingly, while the presence of markers of Muslimness among some women identify them as Muslim and strips them of their ethnic and cultural identities, markers adopted by male participants (e.g. having a beard) are more subtle and ambiguous, often resulting in their whiteness still being recognised and their Muslim identity being overlooked (Amer & Howarth, 2016; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). As Reicher et al. (2010) note, present or absent salient markers of group membership can play a significant role in one's inclusion in or exclusion from a given group – the process of which is very much dependent on recognition.

The examples above focused on the interactional processes of identity recognition within non-Muslim contexts. Within these contexts, perceived recognition as Muslim resulted in the non/misrecognition of their ethnic and cultural identities and the projection of one that is Asian or 'foreign'. Within Muslim contexts however, while their whiteness was not denied as such, their recognition as Muslim was heavily embedded in the *imposition* of a new cultural identity. Many participants, particularly those who had converted to Islam, talked of the expectation for them to shed markers of their whiteness and to replace these with religious and cultural markers such as, discarding their English names and instead adopting Arabic ones and taking on a local Muslim community's cultural styles of dress. In doing so, they are required to dilute their association to their whiteness and in turn validate their Muslim identities through such acts and behaviours (see extract 3).

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<sup>25</sup> The *niqab* is a face veil worn by some Muslim women.

<sup>26</sup> The *abayah* is a long, dress-like attire worn by some Muslim women, often worn by women in the Middle East, specifically countries in The Gulf, but has increased in popularity among Muslims in other countries across the globe.

Extract 3: Becky

*“As soon as I became Muslim, almost the next day, people [other Muslims] expected me to start wearing the hijab, dressing a certain way – even for Eid, to wear cultural clothes. Those aren’t my clothes! I was even expected to change my name. [...] It was like I’ve now started a new life, so everything else is in my past.”*

Parallels may be drawn with what was discussed earlier in relation to white non-Muslim majority group members associating conversion to Islam with having changed cultures. Here however, rather than being stripped of her whiteness by others, Becky describes how she was also expected to actively erase her whiteness herself after having converted. Interestingly, women were often under more pressure than men to conform to these demands and expectations by Muslim communities highlighting the different experiences in relation to identity recognition and its consequences between white Muslim females and males. As Suleiman (2013), notes, not doing so, could call into question the authenticity and extent of their Muslimness demonstrating the conditionality for the extent to which one’s Muslimness is recognised. This results in them potentially being cast out or placed on the periphery of not only their white ingroup for being Muslim, but also their Muslim ingroup for not conforming to normative group behaviour.

***The value and cost of recognition as white: Muslim identity being celebrated and doubted***

While above participants talked of their whiteness being mis/not recognised because of their Muslimness, they also discussed the perceived recognition of their white identities

and the consequences on their Muslim identities. Many participants described how there was an overemphasis on, or to use Renault's (2009) term, over-visibility of, their identity as (white) converts in Muslim contexts. This often led to questions being posed about their Muslimness, casting doubt on their loyalty and dedication to Islam (extract 4: Aidan).

#### Extract 4: Aidan

*"I remember once I went to meet a sister and her family, looking into marriage and stuff. It was a [sic] old Bengali uncle. He goes to me, "You've been Muslim for five years now, you planning on staying Muslims?" I was like, what? How do you-?! I was planning on doing an 8-year stint, as a Muslim before giving Buddhism a try. Much more trendy these days!"*

Aidan's quote demonstrates how white Muslims are perceived to be ascribed a 'lower grade' of Muslimness by other Muslims and are positioned as 'second-class' Muslims because many have converted into the religion unlike those 'born into' the religion. Although his Muslim and white identities were both perceived to be recognised, *how far* Aidan's Muslimness is recognised and seen as 'authentic' (Suleiman, 2013; Taylor, 1994) is rooted in questioning his commitment *because* of his conversion and his whiteness. This suggests that identity recognition processes are somewhat similar to a scale, whereby the degree of recognition is dependent on the interconnections of other identities. Parallels can be drawn with work on identity prototypicality (e.g. Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Turner et al., 1987) and what this means for feelings of recognition, acceptance and belonging when one is seen as a peripheral, rather than a prototypical

member of a group. In this way, there is an allusion to power asymmetries and what it means to belong, as an equal, to a group.

However, there were also instances when participants expressed feeling their identities, as both white *and* Muslim, were equally recognised by other Muslims. Here their whiteness was perceived to be maintained and recognised *because of* their religious identity (see extract 5).

#### Extract 5: Donna

*“White Muslims get put on a pedestal. I was in a mosque and this woman saw me, and people always assume like, “oh are you a convert” because they see the pale skin [...] and she was like “Oh Mashallah [praise be to God] Mashallah, amazing!” and I pointed to my friend [also a convert], she’s Chinese and she was like “oh” and kind of ignored her.”*

This narrative of white Muslims being highly valued and even celebrated for their conversion, and their whiteness bringing validity and recognition to their Muslimness was not uncommon among the interviewees. In fact, many noted how other converts from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds are not given “*conversion points*” (Timothy, 41, Luton) in the same way that white Muslim converts are, with their conversion often being ignored and not acknowledged. Indeed, Suleiman (2013) notes that many white Muslims feel they are treated as ‘trophies’ and that “[b]ecause White- and Western- are perceived to be best, when a White Westerner chooses Islam it appears to validate Islam as a religion” (p.75). These sentiments were echoed throughout the interviews. Thus we see how ethnic and religious identity intersect in the

experiences of recognition (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991) as well as how power dynamics play an important role in recognition processes. Participants' felt their membership to a socially and politically more powerful identity category (being white) could be used by other Muslims to elevate and legitimise an otherwise marginalised group (Muslims) (see also Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019, for similar findings in relation to sexual and racial identity).

The first global theme illustrates how experiences of (mis/non)recognition are shaped by the interactional context, which in turn have consequences for white Muslims being recognised as both white and Muslim. The complexities and contradictions in identity recognition across contexts demonstrate the intricate interconnections between who is doing the recognising, and what the recognition of particular identities means in relation to systems of power and position. A central part of these experiences is the presence or absence of identity markers (Reicher et al., 2010); thus this theme opens the stage for further critical examination of the role of recognition in identity processes and experiences. In the next section we look at how participants strategically perform and negotiate experiences of identity recognition (including its denial) in different contexts.

### **Identity presentation: transgression, identity assertion and avoiding group exclusion**

All participants were strategic in how they performed their identities. They discussed how their previous experiences of (mis/non)recognition influenced their choices and reasons for various strategies. Moreover, they noted how context and who the relevant other was influenced their performative strategies with many adapting and altering their strategies across these contexts.

In non-Muslim spaces, many participants expressed strategically downplaying or concealing their Muslim identities and instead highlighting their contextually non-stigmatised identity, that is, being white (see Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Klein et al., 2007). Doing so facilitated their acceptance into spaces where being identified as Muslim may have caused discomfort, harm or exclusion through being rendered an outcast. In extract 6, Matthew shares his thoughts and experiences;

Extract 6: Matthew

*“I mean on this estate [where he lives] I normally just introduce myself as Matthew, and one of the reasons is we've only been here for four years and I'm- well, I know a lot of people in the area now but I've noticed a lot of them tend to be quite negative towards Muslims so it both allows me to hear what they are saying, keep my ear to the ground. The other thing is if they know me as Matthew and then later on they discover I am Muslim, after getting to know me, maybe that will help give them a better impression, whereas if they already know I'm Muslim they'll probably jump to conclusions already and no-one will bother getting to know me.”*

What Matthew described draws on Hollander's (1958) work on *idiosyncrasy credit* where establishment of credibility, likability and acceptance are crucial steps before dissent or deviation from prototypical behaviours can effectively take place.

Interestingly, while processes of recognition are often talked of as being done by others (e.g. Taylor, 1994), here we see an example of how it can be actively and agentically orchestrated by white Muslims themselves. Meta-perceptions become crucial here in that they aid in the anticipation of possible negative attributions as a result of

recognition of their Muslimness, thus allowing participants to regain a sense of control over the situation (Vorauer et al., 2000). This temporary concealment of their Muslimness is seen as a momentary compromise that potentially has broader, more positive, effects on perceptions of Muslims by non-Muslims “*help[ing] give them a better impression*”.

The absence of visible markers of Muslimness, and thus not being recognised as such, holds power in the example above (see Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Gender plays a crucial role here, in that male participants were often critically aware of their ability to be recognised as white and not Muslim due to the absence of religious markers. What is more interesting however, is that male participants also noted being able to be recognised as white (and misrecognised as not Muslim as a result) even *with* the presence of a chosen Muslim marker – the beard (see extract 7). Many in turn acknowledge how this put them in a position of privilege to be more easily accepted into mainstream non-Muslim spaces compared to other Muslims.

#### Extract 7: James

*“because I’m white, and only have a beard that can be interpreted as me being a hipster, my Islam is less salient in the eyes of the outsiders, so I can navigate mainstream society with my faith being unknown. Less so for Muslims who happen to be from a minority ethnic background, or Muslims who happen to be female and observe a certain style of dress.”*

Interestingly, the beard was the performative religious identity marker of choice among most of the male participants interviewed and many noted (as can be seen with James’ quote above) that it does not, by any means, have a definitive association with Islam. Its

ambiguity gives white Muslim men flexibility as it has different context-specific meanings and identities ascribed to it. On the one hand, its salience allows them to avoid feeling excluded from their white ingroup because where their whiteness is perceived to be recognised, the beard, in this interactional context, ascribes them with the label “*hipster*” rather than being recognised as Muslim. On the other hand however, in predominantly Muslim contexts or in interactions with Muslims, the meaning of the beard is perceived to be understood as a more explicit marker of religious identity thus allowing their Muslim identity to be recognised and acknowledged – “[Muslims] *are less suspicious when I walk into a mosque because it makes a bit more sense. I've got the look*” (Mustafa). In this way, anticipating how others perceive the beard, and its consequences on their religious identity recognition and acceptance into different spaces enables white Muslim men to traverse different contexts with ease while simultaneously maintaining a performative element of their religious identity. In fact, where male participants expressed choosing to take on other markers of their Muslimness – ones that were much more explicitly Muslim, for example, wearing a *jilbab* (Middle Eastern robe) or a *taqiyah/kufi* (type of cap/hat) – they did so only when attending the mosque or Muslim-majority gathering where such explicit visual displays and markers of religious identity are seen as the norm and would, as in the case of the beard, validate their presence further.

White Muslim women did not share examples of performative religious markers that had ambiguous meanings. However, they did discuss the way in which performative markers and context interacted and shaped possible consequences for belonging (extract 8):

### Extract 8: Fatima

*"I was going on a coach trip to Cornwall. It was all old white couples or individuals or groups of friends. I wasn't going to wear my hijab. I would stand out. But of course, when I go into Muslim spaces I do wear the hijab, I'm more easily identified as Muslim and there are no questions regarding my faith."*

Here, we see how the meaning (and use) of the *hijab* is context specific and there is an awareness of how it can function as a marker of difference and exclusion as well as a marker of sameness and inclusion. Therefore, it is used strategically to ensure the recognition (or misrecognition) of their religious identity in a way that is relevant to specific spaces, with a clear understanding of what would be at stake if this is not done. Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth (2012) find similar strategies in their study on practices of veiling in Indonesia and India. The adoption of the *hijab* is contextually driven; being worn or removed to ensure one does not stand out in a given space and so becoming a target of unwelcome representations of difference. It highlights the conscious and reflective thought that goes into expressions, or suppressions, of identity through the adoption, or avoidance, of specific markers in order to be accepted in certain spaces (Blackwood et al., 2015; Schlossberg, 2001). How one thinks one will be seen by others, which identities will be affirmed or not affirmed and what this means in relation to borders of belonging and exclusion are all issues that are considered (Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). This strategic negotiation of identity through the use of markers highlights how individuals agentically seek to temporarily shift the power dynamics of processes of recognition, applying some control over how they wish to be positioned and recognised by relevant others. In doing so, they attempt to achieve a positive self-concept through doing what is seen as

necessary to be recognised as a part of contextually relevant groups (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979; Turner et al., 1987).

In other examples of strategic identity performance, predominantly found in relation to experiences in Muslim contexts, white Muslims sometimes used their recognition as white converts to Islam, and thus non-prototypical members of the ingroup, to challenge the norms in some Muslim communities (extract 9: Aidan).

#### Extract 9: Aidan

*"It's kind of empowering to be outside of the very many norms [...] being a white Muslim, being a white convert, like, that's rare enough, you're kinda given carte blanche [...] It's not unheard of to play a bit dumb especially if it's doing something that I don't think is a bit forward thinking [...] for example we [him and his wife] went to the masjid [mosque], and I knew it was kind of a hard-core mosque - no women in the mosque kind of thing. It was prayer time. I needed to pray. My wife needed to pray. I was like "Come, we're going in". And when they were all kicking off on me, I was like "It's a mosque". I played dumb."*

In his awareness of being recognised as white and as a convert, Aidan describes how he strategically played into assumptions held by some Muslims of converts as lacking in knowledge of Muslim community cultural norms and practices of Islam. He confidently uses his knowledge of Islam as not excluding women from religious spaces and the need for his wife to pray to override exclusionary cultural interpretation of the religion. He noted the relatedness of being a convert with being white and demonstrated the power this affords him to resist and challenge (Özyürek, 2015). This highlights how

power is a critical part of identity negotiation, performance and recognition, particularly in relation to how we strategically position ourselves and perform our identities in response to how we perceive others' to recognise us (Blackwood et al., 2015; Klein et al., 2007).

Interestingly, while a few women did share examples of acts of resistance led by themselves (see extract 11 below for an example), such explicit acts of transgression were generally a rarity among the female participants interviewed, suggesting that there are also gender power dynamics at play. Indeed, even in the extract above, Aidan's wife who was complicit in the act of resistance (although she is not white and thus is not the focus of the research) did not actively engage with the men at the mosque according to the narrative. Rather, it was her husband who was at the forefront of the exchange on her behalf.

Many women expressed being wary of how their explicit resistance and challenging of some traditions and practices may negatively impact them, destabilising their feeling of belonging in Muslim contexts where their position can, at times, already be precarious (as demonstrated previously in extract 8). This draws attention to how white Muslim females actively consider the interactions of their gender, religious and ethnic identities in context and how these sit within power asymmetries (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). As a result, the majority of female participants were also cautious of asserting their identities as white *and* Muslim in contexts where one was felt to be either erased or not recognised. Interestingly however, some did share examples of identity assertion, demanding recognition for the multiple and interconnecting identities and breaking down perceptions of identity incompatibility and contradiction (extract 10):

Extract 10: Jane

*“I don’t need to change my name. It was given to me by my parents, so I won’t change it. Wearing the hijab is also important to me, it shows a part of me and I’m proud of all the things that show a different part of me, even if it confuses other people or goes against what they think”.*

While Jane’s declaration is powerful, this assertion does not guarantee recognition by others, raising questions about what this means for identities that are important parts of one’s self-concept and their recognition being integral to feelings of belonging (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Nevertheless, it demonstrates how agency is used to challenge the mis/nonrecognition of a nuanced and multifaceted identity. Jane is not afraid of the cost of such determination, or the potential exclusion from these ingroups. She remains steadfast in being true to herself, be that when among other Muslims by keeping her English name, or among non-Muslims by wearing the hijab. Yet, performative acts of assertion of Muslim identities in non-Muslim context were not so frequently discussed in the interviews, particularly in comparison to asserting their identities as white in Muslim contexts where for example, white Muslims were expected to shed parts of their cultural heritage as English or white (extract 11):

#### Extract 11: Andrew

*“Some [Muslims] struggle with accepting calling me Andrew, they want me to use an Arabic name, but I insist on it. There is nothing unIslamic or disrespectful about it, so Islam does not require me to change it.”*

Andrew's willingness to potentially be placed at the margins of his Muslim ingroup by not fully adhering to the cultural norms and expectations of its gatekeepers, and resisting expectations to erase his whiteness, speaks to the context-specific power dynamics at play. He uses his knowledge and understanding of Islam in a similar way to what was previously seen in extract 9. Andrew' assertion and demand for recognition of his identity as white in the face of its active denial results in a conscious and vocal declaration and performance of his ethnic identity (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Klein et al., 2007). In doing so, he embodies the compatibility of his religious and ethnic identities that are seen as at odds with one another. This becomes an important step in achieving a positive sense of self (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and places white Muslims at the forefront of challenging not only how they are positioned in relation to boundaries and norms of group belonging, but also, how identities that are seen as incompatible come to be understood.

In this section the various ways that white Muslims perform their identities for, and in response to, perceived (mis/non)recognition have been explored. White Muslims call on a range of strategies, with the choice of strategy depending on the context they are in, the relevant others within them and what identities they believe to be at stake. At times white Muslims choose performative strategies that may result in aspects of their identities not being recognised for fear of harm or exclusion, while at other times they intentionally assert their multifaceted identities in acts of resistance, despite the potential consequences of doing so. Importantly, this section highlights how identity recognition and performance are intrinsically embedded in processes of identity and that the interactional contexts in which these processes take place are consequential for identity (mis/non)recognition and the various strategies employed to orientate and navigate these experiences.

## Conclusion

Our identities are in a constant state of being shaped, contested and challenged in relation to real or imagined others (Reicher, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Thus, identity recognition, or indeed perceived identity recognition, becomes integral to our understanding of identity. The present study has brought to the fore some of the way that identities are not recognised, through being actively denied, erased or incorrectly ascribed. It explored experiences of, and responses to, perceived identity (mis/non)recognition and how performative strategies are used among individuals with multiple and seemingly incompatible identities. With a focus on the experiences and testimonies of white Muslims in the UK, the article has highlighted how recognition and identity performance are interlinked. Salient markers of identity influence identity (mis/non)recognition, which in turn inform performative strategies undertaken in attempts to pre-emptively establish a sense of control over what identities come to be recognised or not recognised as well as the costs and benefits that accompany these processes. As such, the identity performance of white Muslims is reflexive and becomes shaped by the context, the identities that are pertinent to it, the relevant others within it, and the power dynamics that permeate it (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). Indeed, what becomes important to note is the intentional and agentic strategies of performance that lead to deliberate moments of misrecognition. These are orchestrated in order to avoid possible harm, discomfort, marginalisation or even exclusion from a contextually relevant group. Furthermore, the multiple components of their identities are also at times intentionally asserted and performed, actively challenging representations of ethnic and religious incompatibility or the confinement of identities into one-dimensional constructs. While recognition by others

of their identities as multifaceted and complex is not necessarily achieved, this act remains important. It becomes an act of resistance to the power others have in defining and controlling one's sense of self and identity (Coulthard, 2014).

This article provides a detailed example of the complexities of multiple, seemingly incompatible identities, and how they sit in relation to dynamics of power. It highlights some of the nuanced understandings of identity that can emerge from placing recognition and performative strategies at the centre of social identity research. With a focus on identities that are often seen as incompatible, this article demonstrates how these are performed, managed, used strategically and asserted in relation to perceived recognition. Furthermore, who is understood to be doing the (mis/non)recognition, where this is being done and what identities are at stake, are all critical questions that must be incorporated into identity research, particularly in relation to strategies of identity negotiation. For not only is the role of recognition in identity processes central, it is in fact the main thread through which identity construction, negotiation, performance and resistance are connected.

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## Chapter Six: Preface

Chapter Six is the final empirical paper of the thesis. It brings together the findings of the previous two empirical papers (Chapter Four and Five) and tests actual identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by relevant others. It draws on the Social Identity Approach's understanding of identity salience and looks at how the multiple identities of these individuals are seen or not seen through focusing on the role of the presence or absence of religious identity markers and signifiers and the consequences this may have on self-other interactions. It considers how this plays out among majority and minority ingroup members who are *doing* the recognising. Moreover, the chapter investigates the extent to which white British Muslim identities are affirmed when their multiplicity is revealed and how this revelation effects experiences of threat to intergroup distinctiveness and negative affect. This chapter highlights how recognition of our identities by others is central to processes of identification. For how others see us and the constraints and limits they impose on our group belonging inevitably have broader social implications for how the boundaries of identities are marked, collectively understood and experienced.

This chapter has been co-authored with Slieman Halabi (Friedrich Schiller University and Bielefeld University, Germany) and Dr Ilka Gleibs (London School of Economics, UK) and is in-preparation for submission to a journal.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Amer, A., Halabi, S., & Gleibs, I. (in preparation). Being white and Muslim: identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by their respective ingroups.

# **Chapter Six: Being white and Muslim: identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by their respective ingroups**

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## **Abstract**

Recognition of our multiple identities, particularly by ingroup members, is important for a positive sense of self. However, what happens when one identity makes the recognition of another identity difficult because of their perceived incompatibility? We explore this by examining the recognition of white British Muslim identities by their majority and minority ingroups; white British non-Muslims (Experiment 1a,  $N = 343$ ; Experiment 1b,  $N = 164$ ), non-white British Muslims (Experiment 2a,  $N = 350$ ; Experiment 2b,  $N = 182$ ). Using a 2x3 between-groups design, we look at how names (English, Arabic) and religious signifiers (Muslim, Hijab/Beard, no signifier) interact influencing identity recognition of female (Experiment 1a and 1b) and male (Experiment 2a and 2b) white British Muslims. We investigate how far their multiple identities are affirmed by others after their explicit revelation and the effect this has on threats to intergroup distinctiveness and feelings of negativity towards the target.

Our findings highlight that the presence of religious signifiers and markers (except for the beard) increased Muslim identity recognition but decreased white identity recognition. Where religious signifiers/markers were absent the opposite was found. After the target revealed their white British Muslim identity, where religious

markers were absent, recognition of their whiteness decreased. For the majority ingroup, identity revelation led to more distinctiveness threat when markers/signifiers of Muslimness were initially absent. This also mediated feelings of negativity towards the target. For British Muslim participants this was not the case, thus other possible explanations are considered. These findings are discussed in relation to the social implications of group boundaries on belonging.

**Keywords:** Identity markers, identity recognition, distinctiveness threat, group boundaries, white British Muslims.

## Introduction

How others see us, and whether this corresponds with how we see ourselves, is crucial to positive constructions of self. Recognition is thus the need to have our self-definition affirmed and not contested by relevant others (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Research has shown that where recognition does not occur, it can have negative consequences on our well-being and feeling of belonging (Albuja, Sanchez, Cipollina, Gaither, & Straka, 2019). The validation and acknowledgement of one's identity is often reliant on social categorisation in contexts through, for example, the presence of available identity signifiers and/or active identity performance (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007). However, even where such signifiers are present and performance is enacted, recognition can still be hindered by relevant others' perception of group boundaries and their need to protect them. Indeed, where individuals claim membership to multiple, seemingly contradictory identities, understandings of multiple identity compatibility and how they 'fit' with one another can shape how processes and experiences of recognition play out (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2013; Carnaghi, Straga, Coladonato, Bianchi, & Piccoli, 2019).

In this paper, we build on the Social Identity Approach (Reicher et al., 2010) to explore the role of identity salience on the recognition of white British Muslim identities by their respective and relevant ingroups: white British non-Muslims and non-white British Muslims. White British Muslims make up a very small percentage of the British population – just 3% of Muslims in England and Wales, and 3.5% of Muslims in Scotland according to 2011 census data (Elshayyal, 2015; Office for National Statistics, 2011) – the majority of whom converted to the religion. They have been described as a 'minority within a minority' (Brice, 2011), with a unique set of experiences because of the ethnic, national and religious identities they hold. Being both white British (a part of

a dominant ingroup) and Muslim (a part of a minority outgroup) makes them an interesting group through which to examine processes of recognition as they bring together two groups that are often seen to be incompatible (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Moosavi, 2015a). Indeed, ‘whiteness’ is often seen as synonymous with Christianity (D. Phillips, 2006), while Islam, within the British context, is racialised as a religion of the ‘other’, made up of and for black and brown bodies and seen as a threat to ‘Western’ culture and the security of nations and borders (Alam, 2012; Amer & Howarth, 2018; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Moore et al., 2008; Moosavi, 2015a). Thus, this research sheds light on the experiences of those with seemingly incompatible identities by examining how far their multiple group memberships are recognised by their respective ingroup members, what role identity markers and signifiers play in this, and begins to explore the possible consequences of misrecognition on intragroup relations and interactions. What is more, we explore how the assertion of multiple identities influences identity recognition by members of their ingroups, examining whether this explicit disclosure results in their identities being fully recognised, or not, and what factors influence these processes.

### **Recognition and multiple identities**

Identity recognition is central to one’s self-actualisation (Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1992). At its core, recognition reflects a process based on self-other relations, thus as a concept, it fits well with existing understandings of identity processes within the Social Identity Approach. It emphasises the role of others as significant to these dynamics and how having one’s identity misrecognised, or even actively denied, can be detrimental to one’s attempt to achieve a positive sense of self (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This is particularly the case for individuals and groups with seemingly incompatible minority and majority identities as they are positioned within a space

whereby their identities are seen to be in conflict with one another, and thus, are often not simultaneously recognised (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2013; Carnaghi et al., 2019; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019a). This highlights the way in which identities interact in processes of recognition, where the recognition of one identity results in the misrecognition or denial of another. Such perceptions of identity incompatibility are often influenced by the stereotypes and assumptions people hold about the ‘fit’, or rather lack of ‘fit’, of different social categories (Carnaghi et al., 2019; Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019a). It is also crucial to consider how identities and their associated stereotypes can become “over-visible” shaping the lens through which individuals are seen, in turn distorting the extent to which other identities are recognised (Renault, 2009). Indeed, among people with seemingly incompatible or at the very least unusual identity pairings, salient markers of an identity that is seen as ‘other’, can override markers of their belonging to other groups (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). As such, in considering the dynamics of identity recognition and indeed their consequences on intragroup relations and interactions, it becomes important to examine the role of identity markers and signifiers on (mis/non)recognition particularly in relation to the recognition of multiple, seemingly incompatible identities and the possibilities for influencing identity recognition.

### ***The role of identity markers and signifiers in shaping recognition***

The Social Identity Approach notes that different social identities become salient in different contexts. However, visibly prominent identities, such as race, gender or even religion, can confine and constrain the way in which individuals are positioned regardless of their relevance within a given context (Ellemers et al., 2002; Oakes, 1987; Turner et al., 1987). Hopkins and Blackwood's (2011) research on British Muslims demonstrates this, in that the Muslim identity of their participants was found to

consistently override their Britishness. In this way, they become “nothing more than Muslim” (p.226) shaping the extent to which they are seen as belonging to the broader national group. Amer (2020) looked at experiences of perceived (mis/non)recognition among white British Muslims across various contexts. White Muslims described experiencing their white identity being denied by members of their white ingroup as a result of their Muslimness being visible, and instead being ascribed ‘Asian’, ethnic and cultural identities. Interestingly, gender differences were rather prominent in such experiences, with white British Muslim men being conscious of how the religious markers they adopted were often more ambiguous (e.g. a beard) compared with those adopted by women (e.g. the hijab). When considering their perceptions of how their identities are recognised by members of their Muslim ingroup, participants described once again experiencing identity denial of their whiteness because they were Muslim. Yet at other times, their multiple identities were perceived to be celebrated and actively recognised alongside each other. These differences in recognition processes between majority and minority ingroup members are important to note and will be returned to later. However, most significantly here is how regardless of our perceptions of the multiple social identities we hold simultaneously and without tension, other people’s beliefs about who we are and their opinions on the boundaries and compatibility of those social identities can very often confine our experience of self.

Despite such experiences of (mis/non)recognition, it must be acknowledged that agentic strategies can be drawn upon by individuals in response to, or indeed in anticipation of, identity denial or misrecognition. An example of such agentic strategies is the notion of identity performance, that is “the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviours relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity” (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007, p. 30). This can include acts of verbalisation or the adoption or masking of identity symbols and markers (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

For the present paper focus specifically on the performative act of asserting multiple identification on identity recognition by fellow ingroup members. While identity performance can highlight the agency of these individuals, such acts do not always guarantee that fellow ingroup members will affirm their identities, particularly when asserting multiple group memberships that may be seen by others as incompatible (Amer, 2020; Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017; Coulthard, 2014). Such actions could be interpreted as threatening, particularly if one's outgroup status is not initially visible or clear and is later discovered. This can too result in increased feelings of negativity towards the individuals (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003). Thus, in exploring the role of asserting belonging to seemingly incompatible minority and majority groups on identity recognition, it becomes important to consider what is at stake for fellow ingroup members doing the recognising, particularly in relation to threats to the boundaries of their ingroup and to maintaining positive ingroup identities.

### ***The role of threat in multiple identity recognition***

Individuals with multiple, seemingly incompatible identities can be seen by fellow ingroup members as threatening the coherence and intergroup distinctiveness of their specific groups and their boundaries. Research on the experiences of individuals with dual or multiple identities where at least one of the categories is considered an outgroup by fellow ingroup members sheds light on this (e.g. Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafify, 2011; Hopkins, 2011; Verkuyten, 2006; Verkuyten, Wiley, Deaux, & Fleischmann, 2019). In recognising the individual as part of the ingroup, it requires the acceptance or inclusion of their outgroup identity within the boundaries of the ingroup.

Thus, one's identities may be affirmed and recognised by fellow ingroup members if their identities and behaviours are in line with general understandings of ingroup norms (see Levine & Moreland, 2002; Van Vugt & Hart, 2004), or, conversely, one's identities may be denied and thus not recognised if one diverges from these

norms. As the Social Identity Approach states, who we are is partly defined by who we are not. Thus, where these boundaries are blurred, it can cause a threat to a group's distinctiveness. This results in strategies that distance the threat (through for example mis/nonrecognition), protecting and maintaining positive notions of identity for the self and/or the group (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Importantly however, we must note the similarities and differences in relation to how far intergroup distinctiveness can play a role in multiple identity recognition for majority and minority ingroup members, and it is this that this paper also investigates. The Social Identity Approach emphasises that intergroup distinctiveness is important for all groups (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). For the majority ingroup it ensures the maintenance of distinct social identity through differentiation between 'us' and 'them' which is often embedded within power dynamics (Amer, 2020; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For minorities, it too is crucial for maintaining a strong and clear identity, in order to attempt to challenge unequal power dynamics (Chryssochoou & Volpato, 2004; Sanchez-Mazas, 2018). Yet, minorities may also have other strategic considerations that affect the way in which they see fellow ingroup members, particularly those who also happen to be members of an outgroup that is socially dominant and powerful. This might include seeing those 'in-between' individuals as potential allies to the group who can promote the minority collective cause (see Amer & Howarth, 2018). This may explain why in some contexts the multiple identities of white British Muslims are celebrated, or they are expected to perform their Muslimness when it is not obvious (Amer, 2020). In this way, their membership to the dominant majority group can thus be instrumentally used to achieve group goals and aspirations. Explicit demonstrations of one's allegiance and membership to the minority group may be expected in order to prevent individual's from denying their minority group membership, which could in turn damage the group's

positive identity (Warner et al., 2007; see also DeJordy, 2008; Goffman, 1963; Schlossberg, 2001 for literature on passing). In addition however, minority groups can also be more accepting of complex and contradictory identity memberships because of their own experiences of misrecognition, identity denial and experiences of exclusion (Blackwood et al., 2013). Thus, while minority identities can be seen as a threat to the majority group, majority identities are not necessarily seen as such for minorities.

In summary, in exploring the ways that multiple identities are actually recognised, misrecognised or actively denied and attempting to understand these processes through the presence or absence of identity markers/signifiers and the explicit revelation of identity multiplicity, this paper enables for further examination of the underpinnings of identity recognition as carried out by majority and minority ingroup members.

### **The present research**

The multiple, both dominant and marginal, identities that white British Muslims hold, and the way in which they are generally assumed to oppose one another at their essence, make them a particularly interesting group through which to shed light on the under-research topic of recognition. The present paper comprised of four experiments exploring identity recognition of white British Muslims (targets) by both white British non-Muslims and non-white British Muslims (majority and minority ingroup perceivers). Our experimental design attempts to recreate real life interactions in which knowledge about the target's identity definition can be ambiguous. We therefore investigate identity recognition at two phases: before and after multiple identities are explicitly revealed (i.e., white Muslim). In this way, we examine a key part of the recognition process, where the interaction between identity markers and identity expression may together influence identity recognition, with relevant others either

confirming or rejecting of claims to belonging (Amer, 2020; Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017; Coulthard, 2014; Klein et al., 2007). We examine the reactions to such targets in terms of affect, behavioural intentions, distinctiveness threat and recognition of the multiple identities they hold. The following studies will also take the target's gender into account by conducting the same experiments using male or female target in each. Below we set out the overarching hypotheses for the paper. Each of these are discussed in more detail under the specific experiments that follow in the subsequent sections.

Firstly, we consider the role of identity markers/signifiers on identity recognition because as previous research notes, not only is identity recognition influenced by the salience of identity within context manifested in one's identity expression (Reicher et al., 2010) but also that prominent markers/signifiers play an important role in the inferences made by the perceiver on the individual's group memberships (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). This, however, has not yet been shown in an experimental setting and previous findings rely on qualitative studies. Thus, in the current paper, markers/signifiers will be manipulated through the type of name given to the target (i.e. given an Arabic or English name) and/or through indicating the target's religious identity through specific signifiers (i.e. wearing a hijab/having a beard or stating the target is Muslim). We expect that:

H1: For both ingroups (majority and minority), the presence of Muslim identity markers and signifiers will result in the target's recognition as Muslim, but not as white and the absence of Muslim identity markers and signifiers will result in the target's recognition as white, but not as Muslim.

More specifically, where markers of their Muslim identities are present, we predict that the target's Muslim identity will be recognised while their identity as white will be less recognised due to common assumptions of Muslims being of other ethnic heritage.

Conversely, where markers of their Muslim identity are not present, we predict that the target will be able to "pass" as prototypically white (i.e. as non-Muslim), therefore while their identity as white will be recognised, their identity as Muslim will not.

Importantly however, we also expect there to be differences between how Muslim markers for men and women influence recognition. Research has shown that religious markers e.g. the beard, adopted by Muslim men tend to be much more ambiguous than those adopted by women e.g. the hijab (Amer, 2020). Thus, we expect that:

H1a: For both ingroups, Muslim markers and signifiers for the female target (Arabic name, the hijab and stating that the target is Muslim) will all similarly play a role in increasing the target's recognition as Muslim.

H1b: For both ingroups, Muslim markers and signifiers for the male target (Arabic name, the beard and stating that the target is Muslim) will not all play a similar role in increasing the target's recognition as Muslim, where the beard will not play a role in increasing the target's recognition as Muslim compared to the Arabic name and stating being a Muslim.

We also explore how identity markers influence behavioural intention for interaction based on how the target is seen in relation to being a member of the same ingroup as the participants. We anticipate that the presence or absence of Muslim identity markers will influence the extent to which the target is seen as an ingroup member, which will in turn, influence behavioural intention for interaction. More precisely;

H2a: For white participants (majority-ingroup), the presence of Muslim markers resulting in the target being seen as Muslim but not white will lead to lower behavioural intention for interaction, while the absence of Muslim markers resulting in the target being seen as white but not Muslim will lead to higher behavioural intention for interaction.

H2b: For Muslim participants (minority-ingroup), the presence of Muslim markers resulting in the target being seen as Muslim but not white will lead to higher behavioural intention for interaction, while the absence of Muslim markers resulting in the target being seen as white but not Muslim will lead to lower behavioural intention for interaction.

As mentioned above, in this paper we investigate identity recognition at two phases: before and after multiple identities are explicitly revealed (i.e., white Muslim). Thus, we explore a fundamental part of the recognition process, by looking at the interaction between identity markers and identity expression and the role of others in either affirming or denying claims to group membership and belonging. We also examine the role of distinctiveness threat and negative affect towards the target as a result of this explicit revelation of identity. Thus, we expect that:

H3) The presence or absence of religious identity markers and signifiers will influence the extent to which the target's multiple identities are recognised after they are explicitly revealed, particularly among majority ingroup members where recognition as white may go down they previously considered the target to be prototypically white (no Muslim signifiers).

H4) The revelation of the target's multiple identification will have an effect on threats to intergroup distinctiveness and negative feelings towards the target, particularly among majority ingroup members where they previously considered the target to be prototypically white (no Muslim signifiers).

More specifically, where the target is seen as members of the dominant ingroup (white British non-Muslims) by its members i.e. the male and female targets with English names and no clear religious signifiers, we will expect that the recognition of the target's white identity will reduce as a result of their religious identity becoming known. This is as a result these identities being seen as incompatible with one another (Amer, 2020; Suleiman, 2013, 2016). Moreover, this revelation that they self-define as a white British Muslim, may elicit more distinctiveness threat and negative affect as they blur the boundaries between the white and the Muslim categories. We will thus pay a particular attention to situations in which there is lack of religious identity markers and how this influences identity recognition.

For British Muslims however, our predictions are not as clear. Being a minority group, we could assume that the revelation of their Muslim identity where this is previously not clear will have a positive effect on the affirmation of their white identities, as white Muslims are at times seen as a powerful asset to the minority group and are celebrated for their whiteness (Amer, 2020; Suleiman, 2013, 2016). However, at other times, they are expected to shed their whiteness in order to be true members of the minority group and to be more similar with other ingroup members (Amer, 2020). Thus, the targets' expression of their identity multiplicity could result in either their Muslimness being derogated, or their whiteness being denied.

## **The Experiments**

There are four experiments in this paper. Experiment 1a and 1b explore identity recognition of white British Muslim women (female target), while Experiment 2a and 2b explore identity recognition of white British Muslim men (male target). Further, Experiment 1a and 2a explore identity recognition by white British non-Muslims (majority ingroup perceiver), while Experiment 1b and 2b explore recognition by non-white British Muslims (minority ingroup perceiver). The four experiments used the same measures and similar procedures. The procedure and measures are outlined under Experiment 1a and for Experiments 1b, 2a and 2b only changes to the procedure are explicated.

### **Experiment 1a**

We conducted the following study on white British non-Muslims (majority ingroup perceivers) to examine how markers of white Muslim identities interact with the recognition of the target's white and Muslim identities. Based on processes of racialisation and their identities being seen to be incompatible within the broader British context (Amer, 2020; Amer & Howarth, 2018; Nasar Meer, 2013; Moosavi, 2015a; Phillips, 2006), we predict that majority perceivers will show variance in recognising multi-faceted identities depending on whether target's identity as Muslim is salient (through specific signifiers). Thus, when Muslim markers and signifiers are present, there will be more recognition of the target as Muslim but less recognition as white, and vice versa where Muslim markers are not present. We also predict that where markers and signifiers of Muslimness and whiteness are present, the target's Muslim identity salience will override other identities, influencing the way in which the target is recognised. As such, the target will be seen as more Muslim than white. We also explore how this shapes behavioural intention towards the target.

In examining how the absence of religious markers and signifiers will influence recognition for majority ingroup perceivers once the multiple and contradictory identities of white British Muslims are explicitly revealed, we created a two-stage procedure for a semi-realistic interaction with the target in which they reveal their white-Muslim identity in the second stage. We predict that where the target's outgroup membership (Muslim) was not previously clear through markers or signifiers, the recognition of the target's white identity will decrease and Muslim identity will increase. We thus predict that this will also result in the perceivers experiencing intergroup distinctiveness threat and negative feelings towards the target as a result of the target's identity blurring group boundaries.

### ***Method***

#### Participants

Initially, a total of 361 white British non-Muslim participants were recruited for the study via Prolific, an online platform for sourcing participants for research participation. Participants were paid UK national minimum wage<sup>28</sup>. The data was screened to exclude all participants who were not 'White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)' ( $N = 12$ ) and/or did not pass the manipulation check ( $N = 6$ ). The final sample was  $N = 343$  (169 females, 172 males, 2 non-binary). Participants' age ranged between 18 to 74 ( $M = 34.70$ ,  $SD = 12.31$ ). A sensitivity analysis (using G\*power; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta = .80$  and  $\alpha = .05$  to detect effects as small as  $F = .22$ .

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<sup>28</sup> This payment met UK minimum wage requirements (April 2019). Participants were paid £0.69 for the 5-minute study (£8.28 per hour).

## Procedure

After completing a consent form, participants were randomly assigned to either cell of a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, no signifiers) between-subjects design. Participants were led to believe that the purpose of the study was to examine people's assessment of characteristics of others based on limited information.

The experiment was divided into two steps. First (Time1), participants saw a picture of a woman<sup>29</sup> (see Figure 6.1) whose name was either Emily (i.e., English name) or Fatima (i.e., Arabic name). This was accompanied by a vignette introducing the target: "*This is [Emily/Fatima]. She has just moved in next door to you. She knocked on your door to introduce herself and has invited you over for a cup of tea*". Signifiers were manipulated in different ways: The Muslim signifier was manipulated by mentioning that Emily/Fatima is Muslim with the added sentence "*She is Muslim*" after stating her name; in the case of Hijab, participants saw a picture of the target with a head scarf, and in the no-signifier condition, no additional information was added to the picture nor mentioned about the target. Participants were then asked a number of questions about the target (see 2.1.1.3 below for measures at Time1).

In the second step of the experiment (Time2), participants were told that during the conversation with the target "*you find out that she defines herself as a white British Muslim*" and that the questions that followed this piece of information will focus on their opinion about the target and her expression of her identity (see 2.1.1.3 below for measures at Time2). Participants were encouraged to answer the questions according to their genuine personal opinion. At the end of the survey, participants were asked demographic questions.

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<sup>29</sup> Photographs were taken of a self-identifying white British female. Two photographs were taken, one without a hijab and one with a hijab to fit the signifier conditions in the study design. Photographs were not pre-tested but only one model was used for the photographs thus controlling for any variance in the perception of the target.



**Figure 6.1** Photographs of female target used in Experiment 1a.

### Measures

All measures used a 7-point Likert scale (1=‘*Not at all*’ to 7=‘*Extremely*’) unless mentioned otherwise. The order of items within all the dependent variables were counterbalanced. Additional measures that made up a part of our exploratory analysis but were not analysed or are not discussed in this paper are available in the supplementary material (see Appendix 10).

Measures used at Time 1:

*Manipulation check.* Participants were required to indicate whether they saw the picture of the target or not.

*Behavioural intention.* Participants were asked how likely they are to accept the target’s invitation.

*Recognition-Time 1* asked participants to rate the likelihood of four separate items relating to the identity of the target: “[Emily] is British”, “[Emily] is Muslim” and “[Emily] is white”.

*Attractiveness.* The target's attractiveness was measured using a one-item scale: “*How attractive do you find [Emily]?*”. This was asked to control for attractiveness if a significant difference was found.

Measures used at Time2:

*Manipulation check.* Participants were asked whether the target identifies herself as a white British Muslim.

*Recognition-Time2.* This measure asked participants the extent to which they think that the target can be truly “*British*”, “*white*” and “*Muslim*” in their opinion.

*Negative and positive affect.* The extent to which the target’s statement revealing their identity as a white British Muslim made participants feel was measured to determine negative and positive affect (“*annoyed, irritated, offended, angry*”;  $\alpha = .94$  and “*happy, content, pleased, delighted*”;  $\alpha = .90$ ).

*Distinctiveness threat.* This was adapted from (Warner, Hornsey, & Jetten, 2007) and included 5 items, (“*people like [Emily] blur the boundaries between White British people and Muslims; threaten the differences between white British people and Muslims*”, “*People like [Emily] who identify as Muslim threaten the integrity of white British people*”, “*People like [Emily] who identify as white British make it harder to tell who is Muslim and who is not*”;  $\alpha = .74$ ).

## **Results**

There was no difference between male and female participants in the extent to which they found the target to be attractive  $t(339) = .25, p = .802$  which rules out any gender effect caused by using a female stimulus in the study. A table of means and standard deviations for all conditions across the measures is provided below (Table 6.1).

Unless mentioned otherwise, analyses were conducted using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No signifiers)

design. To measure the difference between recognition items Time 1 and Time 2 (i.e., before and after revealing the target's white British Muslim identity), we calculated a mean difference scale we called *Recognition differences* by subtracting recognition-Time1 from recognition-Time2 on each relevant identity (i.e., Muslim and white). Higher values indicate more recognition after the revelation of the target's white and Muslim identities and lower values indicate a reduction in recognition post-revelation.

**Table 6.1** Means and standard deviations of target conditions, Study 1a, N=343

	<i>Emily</i>			<i>Fatima</i>		
	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hijab</i>	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hijab</i>
<i>Invitation acceptance</i>	5.69 (1.02)	5.26 (1.42)	5.37 (1.35)	5.33 (1.23)	5.84 (1.23)	5.47 (1.67)
<b><i>Recognition-Time1</i></b>						
<b><i>British</i></b>	4.75 (1.19)	5.07 (1.33)	4.75 (1.36)	4.12 (1.40)	4.66 (1.42)	4.72 (1.09)
<b><i>Muslim</i></b>	2.29 (1.10)	5.63 (1.86)	5.44 (1.22)	3.22 (1.06)	6.27 (1.34)	5.53 (1.16)
<b><i>white</i></b>	6.64 (.73)	6.28 (1.16)	4.45 (1.76)	5.62 (1.34)	6.07 (1.32)	4.33 (1.88)
<b><i>Recognition-Time2</i></b>						
<b><i>white</i></b>	6.29 (1.17)	6.43 (1.06)	5.87 (1.71)	6.16 (1.23)	6.57 (.87)	5.88 (1.70)
<b><i>British</i></b>	6.07 (1.46)	6.35 (1.10)	5.55 (1.92)	5.90 (1.54)	6.27 (1.34)	6.18 (1.33)
<b><i>Muslim</i></b>	6.00 (1.43)	6.19 (1.33)	6.13 (1.13)	5.95 (1.52)	6.48 (.99)	6.30 (1.11)
<b><i>Recognition gap-white</i></b>	-0.35 (1.11)	0.15 (1.38)	1.42 (1.79)	0.53 (1.69)	0.50 (1.33)	1.55 (1.89)
<b><i>Recognition gap-British</i></b>	1.33 (1.81)	1.28 (1.64)	.80 (1.74)	1.78 (1.70)	1.60 (1.65)	1.47 (1.36)
<b><i>Recognition gap-Muslim</i></b>	3.71 (1.79)	0.56 (1.78)	0.70 (1.39)	2.72 (1.69)	0.21 (1.53)	0.78 (1.67)
<b><i>Distinctiveness threat</i></b>	3.11 (1.30)	2.82 (1.28)	2.42 (1.31)	2.40 (1.15)	2.84 (1.30)	2.51 (1.26)
<b><i>Negative affect</i></b>	1.42 (0.91)	1.60 (0.92)	1.48 (0.97)	1.53 (0.91)	1.24 (0.70)	1.40 (0.93)

### Interaction effect for Name X Signifiers

#### *Dependent variables Time1: Behavioural intention and recognition*

There was no main effect of name nor signifier on accepting the target's invitation  $F < .531$  and  $p > .467$ . Interactions between Name and Signifiers were found on the likelihood to accept the target's invitation  $F(2, 337) = 3.45, p = .033, \eta_p^2 = .020$ . When the target was Muslim, participants were more willing to accept an invitation for tea from Fatima than Emily  $F(1, 337) = 5.15, p = .024, \eta_p^2 = .015, 95\% \text{ CI } [.08, 1.08]$ .

Main effect of Name on recognising the target at Time1 as Muslim and as white  $F_{Muslim}(1, 337) = 15.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .043$ ;  $F_{white}(1, 337) = 8.34, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .537$ , and main effect of Signifiers on recognition as Muslim and white  $F_{Muslim}(2, 337) = 195.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .260$ ;  $F_{white}(2, 337) = 59.08, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .260$  were also qualified by an interaction between Name X Signifiers  $F_{Muslim}(2, 337) = 3.18, p = .043, \eta_p^2 = .019$ ;  $F_{white}(2, 337) = 3.42, p = .034, \eta_p^2 = .020$ . Participants in the Muslim conditions recognised Fatima as more Muslim (Time 1) than Emily,  $F(1, 337) = 6.54, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .019, 95\% \text{ CI } [.15, 1.13]$ . In the no signifier conditions, participants too recognised Fatima as more Muslim than Emily  $F(1, 337) = 14.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .041, 95\% \text{ CI } [.45, 1.42]$  and as less white than Emily  $F(1, 337) = 14.24, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .041, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.55, -.49]$ . No difference between Fatima and Emily were found on Muslim and white recognition in the Hijab condition  $F < .200$  and  $p > .655$ .

#### *Dependent variables Time 2: recognition and distinctiveness threat*

After revealing the target's white British Muslim identity, the main effects of signifier  $F(2, 337) = 2.68, p = .070, \eta_p^2 = .016$  was qualified with a Name X Signifiers interaction on intergroup distinctiveness  $F(2, 337) = 3.56, p = .030, \eta_p^2 = .021$ . As hypothesised, in the no signifier condition, participants found the target to be more threatening to intergroup distinctiveness when she had the English name, Emily than the Arabic name, Fatima  $F(1, 337) = 8.88, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .026, 95\% \text{ CI } [.24, 1.18]$ . Also, participants

found Emily wearing no hijab as more threatening than Emily wearing a hijab  $F(2, 337) = 4.37, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .025, 95\% \text{ CI } [.13, 1.27]$ .

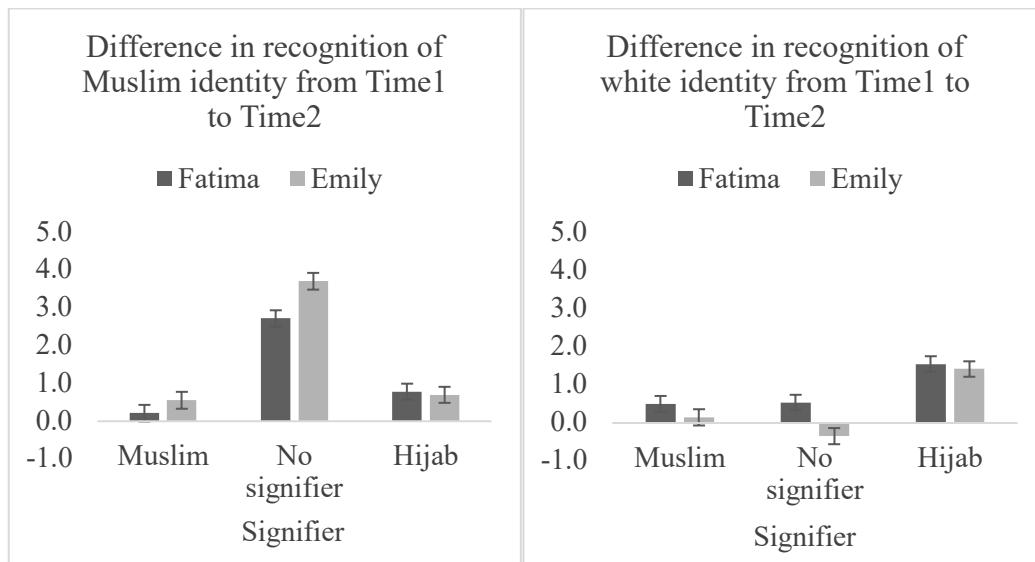
#### *Differences between Time1 and Time2: White and Muslim recognition*

To examine differences between white and Muslim identity recognitions across our condition but also within participants' differences in recognition of one identity over the other, we conducted a mixed-design ANOVA in which white and Muslim recognition difference were entered as a within-subjects factor, and Signifier and Name as between-subjects factors. A sensitivity analysis at the conventional level of alpha at .05 and power of .80 indicated that the sample size of 343 participants can detect effects as small as  $F = .10$ .

There was a main effect of the white-Muslim recognition difference  $F(1, 337) = 58.46, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .148$ , which significantly interacted with the target's name  $F(1, 337) = 16.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .047$  as well as with the target's signifiers  $F(2, 337) = 122.99, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .422$ . This main effect and second-order interactions were qualified with a three-way interaction between name, signifier and the white-Muslim recognition difference factor  $F(2, 337) = 6.31, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .036$ .

As can be seen in Figure 6.2, participants in the no signifier condition, recognised Emily more as Muslim than Fatima  $F(1, 337) = 10.12, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .029, 95\% \text{ CI } [.38, 1.59]$  and recognised Emily as less white than Fatima  $F(1, 337) = 8.88, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .026, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.46, -.30]$ . Moreover, in the no signifier condition, both Emily and Fatima were recognised more as Muslim than as white  $F(1, 337) = 233.11, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .409, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.53, 4.58]$ ,  $F(1, 337) = 71.70, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .175, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.68, 2.70]$ , respectively. Yet, as can clearly be seen, recognising Emily as more Muslim than white has more than twice the effect size than in the case of Fatima.

Interestingly, there was also a significant difference in the hijab conditions. Both Emily and Fatima in the Hijab condition were recognised more as white than Muslim to a similar extent  $F(1, 337) = 7.94, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .023, 95\% \text{ CI } [.22, 1.22]$ ,  $F(1, 337) = 9.09, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .026, 95\% \text{ CI } [.27, 1.27]$ , respectively.



**Figure 6.2** Interaction between name, signifier and white-Muslim recognition differences in Experiment 1a. Recognition differences describe the difference between recognising the target's identity before and after the target reveals her white Muslim identity and were calculated by subtracting recognition Time1 from recognition Time2. Higher values indicate more recognition.

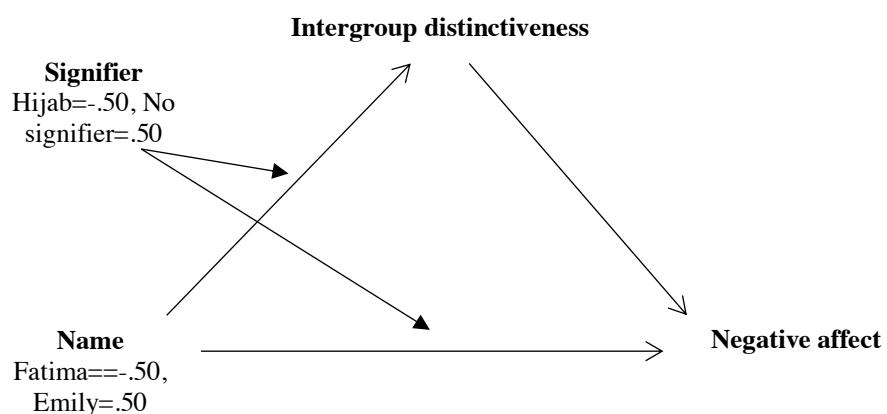
#### The role of intergroup distinctiveness threat as a mediator

We conducted a moderated mediation analyses to examine our hypothesis that intergroup distinctiveness underlies the psychological process of the negative reactions towards the target after revealing her white British Muslim identity. As mentioned earlier, we expect this to be the case as this revelation highlights to members of the majority ingroup the contradictory and seemingly incompatible identities that the target holds by being both white and Muslim. Thus, in identifying as both, they blur the boundaries between what it means to be white and what it means to be Muslim.

We used Hayes PROCESS micro (Hayes, 2013) and bootstrapping (5000) to conduct a moderated mediation analyses (model 8) that examine the role of intergroup

distinctiveness as mediating negative affect towards the target. As presented in Figure 3, the target's name was entered as the predictor, the signifier as the moderator and intergroup distinctiveness as a mediator. Since there was no major difference between reactions towards and recognition of the target wearing a Hijab or when described as Muslim, we chose to compare the No Signifier condition to the Hijab condition. Results show that in the No Signifier condition (vs. Hijab), participants felt more intergroup distinctiveness threat when in the Emily condition than in Fatima condition  $b = .71, SE = .23, t = 3.04, p = .026, 95\% \text{ CI } [.25, 1.17]$  and, in turn, intergroup distinctiveness predicted more negative affect  $b = .35, SE = .06, t = 6.00, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.24, .47]$ . Intergroup distinctiveness mediated the process only when no signifiers were present: indirect effects for more negative affect  $b = .25, SE = .08, 95\% \text{ CI } [.11, .45]$ .

Thus, what we see here is that specifically for where the target is able to 'pass' as a prototypical member of the white ingroup due to the absence of any explicit religious signifiers identifying her membership to a clear outgroup, majority-ingroup participants find this to be threatening the distinctiveness of their group. As such, they report significant levels of negativity towards to target as a result of her revealing her multifaceted identity that was not initially explicit.



**Figure 6.3** Intergroup distinctiveness significantly mediated the negative affect towards the English-named target (Emily) in the No Signifier condition.

### ***Discussion***

The results of Experiment 1a highlight how names and the presence or absence of religious identity signifiers influence identity recognition. We see that for white British non-Muslim perceivers (relevant others that constitute the dominant majority), when keeping the presence or absence of religious identity markers constant, the name of the target (English vs Arabic) acts as the main indicator for the recognition of the target's Muslim identity (Arabic name) or white identity (English name). We also see how markers of identity shaped behavioural intention, where the invitation from the target with conflicting, 'incompatible' markers (English name and Muslim) was accepted less than the target with consistent markers (Arabic name and Muslim). However, in attempting to understand and interpret this result, had this been based on participants perceiving the target as threatening as a result of blurring identity boundaries and the presence of conflicting markers, we would assume that similar results would be seen with the target with an English name and a hijab. This is not the case however, therefore it becomes difficult to draw conclusions from this finding.

After the revelation of the target's identity as a white British Muslim (Time2), we see that where the target's identity as Muslim was not previously salient (English name, no religious signifier), there was an increase in threat to intergroup distinctiveness reported by the participants, with this playing a mediating role in the experience of negative affect. Moreover, the target's identity as white significantly reduced compared to before the revelation (Time1) which could be seen as a means of punishment for blurring and threatening the boundaries of what it means to be white (Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Jacques-Philippe, 1988; Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). In line with this, in relation to the recognition of the target's Muslim identity, at Time2 we see how having been revealed as 'other' she becomes *affirmed* as 'other' through this increase in her recognition as Muslim. Conversely,

where markers or signifiers of ‘otherness’ were always present thus overriding any possibility of her white identity (e.g. Hijab condition) the revelation of her whiteness resulted in an increase in the recognition the target as white. This result was surprising as we would assume that the target claiming membership to the ingroup, while simultaneously displaying clear outgroup markers, would once again, result in experiences of threat to the group’s distinctiveness.

In the next experiment we look at these same dynamics but in relation to British non-white Muslim participants in order to explore patterns and/or differences in the findings in relation to recognition when considering relevant others that belong to the minority ingroup.

### **Experiment 1b**

Experiment 1b used the same design as Experiment 1a but this time considered the identity recognition of white British Muslim women by British non-white Muslim participants (members of their minority ingroup). Here we would once again predict that the presence of religious markers or signifiers will make their Muslim identity salient and therefore result in the target being recognised as more Muslim than white. Where religious markers or signifiers are not present, we predict the opposite will happen.

In exploring identity recognition where both the target’s whiteness and Muslimness is salient, the influence of identity salience through markers and signifiers on behavioural intention, and where she reveals her multiple identities, our predictions are less clear. Previous findings have shown that whiteness is at times seen to be celebrated because of the subject’s Muslim identity, while at other times it is dismissed and expected to be shed because of the subject’s Muslim identity (Amer, 2020).

Moreover still, as a result of a minority groups own experiences of mis or

nonrecognition of their multiple identities (e.g. British Muslims, Blackwood et al., 2013), they may simply affirm the target's multiple identities after they are explicitly revealed. The next experiment will clarify under which conditions identity markers influence British Muslim's recognition of and reactions towards white Muslim. It will also consider the role that intergroup distinctiveness plays in these dynamics, for while distinctiveness is important for minority groups, there may also be other factors at play when evaluating possible ingroup members such as the expectation of minority group assimilation, demonstration of allegiances and allyship (Amer, 2020; Warner et al., 2007).

### ***Method***

#### **Participants**

Initially, a total of 237 participants completed the study (117 via snowballing and advertising on social media and 120 via Prolific). As some of the data being collected on social media a substantial number of extraneous data was found. The data was filtered to exclude participants who identified as 'White', non-Muslims/no religious identity, participants below the age of 18/not reported and those who failed the manipulation check (total  $N = 73$ ). The final sample was  $N = 164$  (107 females, 56 male, 1 non-binary). Participants were aged between 18 and 53 ( $M = 28.64$ ,  $SD = 7.99$ ). Their ethnicities were 'Black (African, Caribbean, other Black background)'  $N = 11$ , 'Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)'  $N = 120$ , 'Asian other background'  $N = 7$ , 'Arab/Middle Eastern'  $N = 12$ , 'Mixed/Multiple ethnic group'  $N = 11$  and 'None of the above'  $N = 3$ .

The lower sample size in comparison to the previous experiment is reflective of the participant target population being hard to reach. Nevertheless, a sensitivity analysis

(using G\*power; (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that final sample size provides power of 1- $\beta$  = .80 and  $\alpha$  = .05 to detect effects as small as  $F=.32$ .

### Materials and procedure

The instructions and procedure were identical to those in Experiment 1a in which participants were randomly assigned to either cell of a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, no signifiers) between-subjects design.

### Measures

The same measures were used as with Experiment 1a. In Table 6.2 we report the internal consistency values for the relevant measures.

**Table 6.2** Alphas of measures for Experiment 1b

Measure	$\alpha$
<i>Negative affect</i>	.88
<i>Positive affect</i>	.90
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	.68

### **Results**

Similar to Experiment 1a, there was no difference in the extent to which male and female participants found the target to be attractive  $t(161) = .978, p = .330$  which rule out any gender effect caused by using a female stimulus in the study. Interactions were found between Name and Signifiers on recognising the target as Muslim and as English, Scottish, Northern Irish or Welsh at Time1. There were no qualified interactions for the variables at Time2. Indeed, unlike our findings among white British non-Muslim participants, no significant interaction emerged on intergroup distinctiveness threat  $F < 1$  and  $p > .60$ . A table of means and standard deviations for all conditions across the measures is provided below (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Means and standard deviations of target conditions, Study 1b, N=164

	<i>Emily</i>			<i>Fatima</i>		
	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hijab</i>	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hijab</i>
<i>Invitation acceptance</i>	4.23 (1.67)	5.88 (1.28)	5.67 (1.60)	4.93 (1.54)	5.69 (1.23)	6.12 (1.24)
<b>Recognition-Time1</b>						
<i>British</i>	4.90 (1.37)	5.15 (1.80)	5.33 (1.52)	4.36 (1.77)	5.31 (1.62)	5.12 (1.56)
<i>Muslim</i>	2.23 (1.10)	5.58 (1.86)	6.41 (.89)	5.11 (1.71)	5.85 (1.54)	6.65 (.69)
<i>white</i>	5.60 (1.56)	6.15 (1.52)	5.15 (2.03)	4.93 (1.72)	4.77 (1.72)	4.15 (1.71)
<b>Recognition-Time2</b>						
<i>white</i>	5.80 (1.67)	6.00 (1.74)	6.00 (1.30)	5.75 (1.69)	5.46 (2.00)	5.65 (2.07)
<i>British</i>	5.87 (1.53)	6.00 (1.50)	6.07 (1.27)	6.25 (1.23)	5.69 (1.41)	6.42 (1.03)
<i>Muslim</i>	6.30 (1.06)	6.35 (.94)	6.52 (.75)	6.50 (.75)	6.35 (.98)	6.69 (.55)
<i>Recognition gap-white</i>	-.43 (1.96)	-.15 (1.19)	1.17 (2.08)	.82 (2.22)	.69 (2.31)	1.50 (2.06)
<i>Recognition gap-British</i>	.97 (2.16)	.85 (1.78)	.74 (1.53)	1.89 (1.66)	.38 (1.75)	1.31 (1.64)
<i>Recognition gap-Muslim</i>	4.07 (1.57)	.77 (1.88)	.11 (1.05)	1.39 (1.79)	.50 (1.68)	.04 (.72)
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	2.83 (1.51)	2.66 (1.35)	2.31 (1.10)	2.21 (.90)	2.40 (1.18)	2.01 (.95)
<i>Negative affect</i>	1.22 (.61)	1.33 (.65)	1.33 (.76)	1.22 (.55)	1.38 (.86)	1.30 (.86)

#### *Dependant variables Time1: recognition*

The main effect of Name on recognising the target as Muslim  $F(1, 157) = 27.87, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .151$ , and the main effect of Signifiers on recognising the target as Muslim  $F(2, 157) = 65.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .454$  was qualified with Name X Signifiers interactions on Muslim recognition  $F(2, 157) = 17.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .179$ . There was no significant interaction on behavioural intention.

In the no signifier condition, participants recognised Emily as less Muslim than Fatima,  $F(1, 157) = 64.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .290, 95\% \text{ CI } [-3.58, -2.16]$ . Moreover, participants recognised Fatima as more Muslim when she wore a Hijab compared to when she had no signifier, but not when they were informed she was Muslim,  $F(2, 157)$

$= 8.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .099$ , 95% CI [.65, 2.44]. Emily on the other hand was seen as more Muslim both in the Hijab condition and in the Muslim condition  $F(2, 157) = 75.48, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .490$ , compared to in the no signifier condition, 95% CI [3.29, 5.05] and 95% CI [2.45, 4.23], respectively.

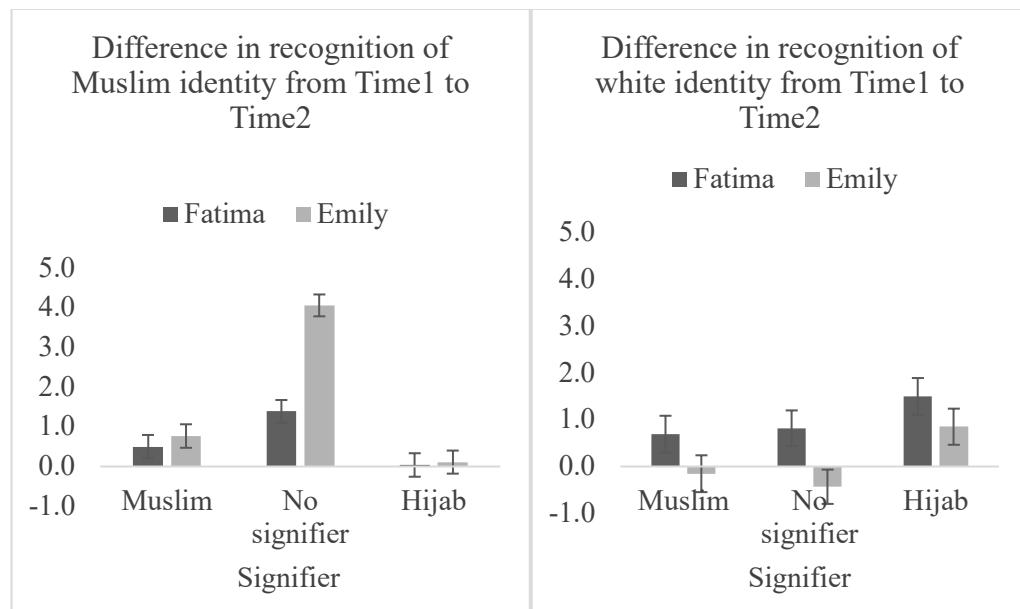
*Differences between Time1 and Time2: White and Muslim recognition*

In relation to the Muslim and white identity recognition differences between Time1 and Time2, as with Experiment 1a we conducted a mixed design ANOVA with white recognition and Muslim recognition difference as within-subjects variables and name and signifier as between-subjects variables. A sensitivity analysis indicated that the sample size of 164 participants can detect effects as small as  $F = .14$ .

There was a main effect of the white-Muslim recognition difference factor  $F(1, 157) = 11.04, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .066$ , which significantly interacted with the target's name  $F(1, 157) = 28.32, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .153$  as well as with the target's signifiers  $F(2, 157) = 35.17, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .309$ . This main effect and second-order interactions were qualified with a three-way interaction between Name, Signifier and the white-Muslim recognition difference factor  $F(2, 157) = 8.09, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .093$ .

As can be viewed in Figure 6.4, after the target revealed her white Muslim identity, participants in the No Signifier condition (but not in the Hijab or Muslim condition) recognised Emily more as Muslim than Fatima  $F(1, 157) = 45.25, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .224$ , 95% CI [1.89, 3.46] however less white than Fatima  $F(1, 157) = 45.25, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .224$ , 95% CI [-2.30, -.21].

In the no signifier condition (and less so in the Muslim condition), participants recognised Emily more as Muslim than white  $F(1, 157) = 114.65, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .422, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.67, 5.33]$ ,  $F(1, 157) = 4.18, p = .043, \eta_p^2 = .026, 95\% \text{ CI } [.03, 1.82]$  while Fatima was recognised as both Muslim and as white to a similar extent. In the Hijab condition, Fatima (but not Emily) was also recognised more as white than as Muslim  $F(1, 157) = 10.48, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .063, 95\% \text{ CI } [.57, 2.35]$ .



**Figure 6.4** Interaction between name and signifier and white-Muslim recognition differences for Experiment 1b. Recognition differences describe the difference between recognising the target's identity before and after the target reveals her white Muslim identity and were calculated by subtracting recognition Time 1 from recognition Time 2. Higher values indicate more recognition.

## Discussion

The results of experiment 1b show similar results to experiment 1a. For British non-white Muslim perceivers (relevant others that belong to the minority group), the name of the target (English vs Arabic) acts as the main indicator for the recognition of the target's Muslim identity (Arabic name) or white identity (English name) at Time1. Markers and signifiers of religious identity come into play when names are constant, with explicitly stating that the target is Muslim having the most effect on recognition as

Muslim. What is more, after the revelation of the target's identity as a white British Muslim (Time2), we see that the recognition of the target's Muslim identity increases where this identity was not previously salient through markers. This increase in the recognition of the target's white identity mirrors previous findings which discuss the way in which white Muslims are celebrated for their Muslim identity and are often seen as the 'ultimate prize' by members of the minority group (Amer, 2020 Suleiman, 2013). However, where markers of Muslimness were absent, the target's whiteness is simultaneously downgraded thus they come to be seen as less white. In attempting to understand this, perhaps the expectation to perform and embody the minority identity and to forego the privilege of passing as a 'full', prototypical majority member plays a role here (Amer, 2020). Thus, where this is not done, (e.g. English name, no religious signifier) the target is 'punished' through a lack of recognition of their whiteness. Indeed, in considering these possible explanations, they can shed light on the finding that when controlling for name (English) the target with no markers of her Muslim identity (no signifier) was seen as more Muslim than white when compared with a target with a religious signifier (Muslim).

In sum, our finding of Experiment 1a and Experiment 1b convey no difference between white non-Muslim British and non-white British Muslim participants. Yet the motivation for (mis)recognising white Muslim may differ between the two samples. As we indeed show, intergroup distinctiveness is triggered by the white Muslim target in the absence of identity marker. This, however, was only relevant among white non-Muslim participants but not among our non-white Muslim participants. As mentioned above, one speculation can be that the latter participants are less concerned with protecting the group boundaries but rather are more sensitive as a minority to strategic evaluation of white Muslim targets. Indeed, white Muslim are mostly converts, and thus are members of a high-status (out)group that join a low-status (in)group. As a result,

contrary to members of the majority ingroup, Muslim minority ingroup members may conceive white Muslim as less of a threat to their group and as allies that become an achievement for their group as long as allegiances to the minority group are clear.

We examine these dynamics further in the subsequent two experiments.

Moreover, while Experiments 1a and 1b examined recognition of female white British Muslims, in Experiments 2a and 2b we turn to explore how these connections play out in the recognition of white British Muslim males and consider the role of identity markers on gender differences in how identity recognition plays out.

### **Experiment 2a**

In Experiment 1a, we showed that when a white Muslim female has no signifiers of her Muslim identity and can be perceived as an ingroup member due to her name, she is perceived as more threatening to group boundaries and distinctiveness. We thus see how identity markers, or the absence thereof, play a major role in identity recognition.

However, the implications on recognition by identity markers may vary across genders. In the case of white Muslim men for instance, having a beard (often used as a marker of Muslimness) without further indication of one's Muslim identity can hold much ambiguity, resulting in it being potentially perceived as part of one's personal style (e.g., hipster) rather than a religious signifier (Amer, 2020). Thus, white Muslim men with beards will become categorised as white but not as Muslim. However, when one's name indicates a Muslim identity, having a beard may be associated as a marker of religiosity and thus being categorised as more Muslim than white.

Our motivation in this study is thus to examine how in the case of white Muslim men, social cues of their Muslim identity influence recognition of their white and Muslim identities and how they differ from the case of white Muslims females. In

addition, as with the previous experiments we also investigate what influence these may have on behavioural intention, recognition of identity multiplicity after it is revealed, and on distinctiveness threat and negative affect. As such, we predict that for white Muslim male targets we will find similar results in the role of identity markers in recognition by majority ingroup members as found in Experiment 1a with one main difference – where the religious identity marker is ambiguous (a beard with no other qualifying religious marker) identity recognition will follow the same pattern as no religious markers being present. That is, the target's identity as white will be recognised more than their identity as Muslim.

### ***Method***

#### Participants

A total of 366 British participants were recruited via Prolific. Data was screened to exclude participants who were not 'White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)' ( $N = 11$ ) and/or failed the manipulation checks ( $N = 5$ ). The final sample was  $N = 350$  (178 females, 172 males). Participants were aged between 18 and 75 ( $M = 36$ ,  $SD = 12.64$ ). A sensitivity analysis (using G\*power; (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta = .80$  and  $\alpha = .05$  to detect effects as small as  $F = .22$ .

#### Materials and procedure

The instruction and the procedure were similar to those used as with Experiment 1a in which participants were randomly assigned to each cell of a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, no signifiers) between-subjects design, with three main differences: 1) as this experiment explored identity recognition of white British Muslim men, participants saw a picture of a man<sup>30</sup>, 2) while the vignettes were the same, the

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<sup>30</sup> Photographs were taken of a self-identifying white British male who had grown a beard for the purpose of this study. Two photographs were taken, one with a beard and one without to fit the signifier conditions in the study design. Photographs were not pre-tested but once again,

English and Arabic names attributed to the target were Jack and Ahmed, and 3) the Hijab signifier condition in Experiment 1a was replaced with a Beard signifier, thus, in the Beard signifier condition, participants saw a picture of the target with a beard (see Figure 6.5).



**Figure 6.5** Photographs of male target used in Experiment 2a.

### Measures

The same measures were used as with Experiment 1a. Below, in table 6.4 we report the factors for the relevant measures.

**Table 6.4** Alphas of measures for Experiment 2a

Measure	<i><math>\alpha</math></i>
<i>Negative affect</i>	.94
<i>Positive affect</i>	.90
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	.74

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only one model was used for the photographs thus controlling for any variance in the perception of the target.

## Results

Female participants ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.493$ ) found the male target in this study to be more attractive than male participants ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.673$ ),  $t(340.89) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .002$ . This, however, did not interact with our manipulated variables on the attractiveness of the target. A table of means and standard deviations for all conditions across the measures is provided below (Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5** Means and standard deviations of target conditions, Study 2a, N=350

	<i>Jack</i>			<i>Ahmed</i>		
	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beard</i>	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beard</i>
<i>Invitation acceptance</i>	4.32 (1.72)	4.93 (1.41)	4.16 (1.54)	4.43 (1.86)	4.67 (1.68)	4.57 (1.73)
<b>Recognition-Time1</b>						
<i>British</i>	4.96 (1.22)	5.02 (1.49)	5.03 (1.18)	4.57 (1.52)	5.11 (1.42)	4.43 (1.35)
<i>Muslim</i>	2.45 (1.03)	5.70 (1.77)	2.38 (1.00)	3.74 (1.44)	5.81 (1.68)	4.64 (1.48)
<i>white</i>	6.79 (.49)	6.38 (1.27)	6.47 (1.14)	5.87 (1.49)	5.96 (1.58)	5.13 (1.73)
<b>Recognition-Time2</b>						
<i>white</i>	6.00 (1.44)	6.18 (1.26)	6.38 (1.17)	6.20 (1.31)	6.28 1.46)	5.80 (1.66)
<i>British</i>	6.00 (1.44)	6.18 (1.26)	6.38 (1.17)	5.89 (1.65)	6.23 (1.52)	5.75 (1.72)
<i>Muslim</i>	5.61 (1.59)	5.62 (1.81)	5.76 (1.57)	5.98 (1.34)	6.39 (1.24)	6.07 (1.43)
<i>Recognition gap-white</i>	-.79 (1.52)	-.20 (1.46)	-.09 (1.40)	.68 (1.81)	.32 (1.42)	.44 (1.61)
<i>Recognition gap-British</i>	.84 (2.05)	.82 (2.01)	.98 (1.87)	1.31 (2.00)	1.12 (1.85)	1.32 (1.95)
<i>Recognition gap-Muslim</i>	3.16 (1.55)	-.08 (1.41)	3.38 (1.53)	2.25 (1.97)	.58 (1.69)	1.43 (1.73)
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	3.23 (1.28)	3.13 (1.17)	3.15 (1.13)	3.08 (1.30)	3.00 (1.39)	2.96 (1.61)
<i>Negative affect</i>	1.75 (1.15)	1.55 (.99)	1.71 (1.10)	1.70 (1.05)	1.43 (.82)	1.71 (1.20)

### *Dependent variables Time 1: recognition*

A main effect of Name emerged on recognising the target as more Muslim  $F(1, 343) = 62.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .155$  and as white  $F(1, 343) = 38.10, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .100$ . A main

effect of Signifiers also emerged on recognising as Muslim  $F(2, 343) = 116.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .405$  and as white  $F(2, 343) = 4.75, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .027$ .

These main effects were qualified with interactions between Name X Signifier on Muslim recognition  $F(2, 343) = 16.52, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .088$  and on white recognition  $F(2, 343) = 3.46, p = .033, \eta_p^2 = .020$ . The interactions show a pattern of results in which in the No Signifier as well as the Beard conditions (but not in the Muslim condition), Jack was recognised as more white than Ahmed,  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 343) = 13.55, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .038, 95\% \text{ CI } [.43, 1.41]$ ,  $F_{beard}(1, 343) = 28.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .076, 95\% \text{ CI } [.85, 1.84]$ . Lastly, Jack was recognised less as Muslim than Ahmed,  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 343) = 23.66, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .065, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.81, -.77]$ ,  $F_{beard}(1, 343) = 70.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .171, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.79, -1.74]$ .

#### *Differences between Time1 and Time2: White-Muslim-recognition*

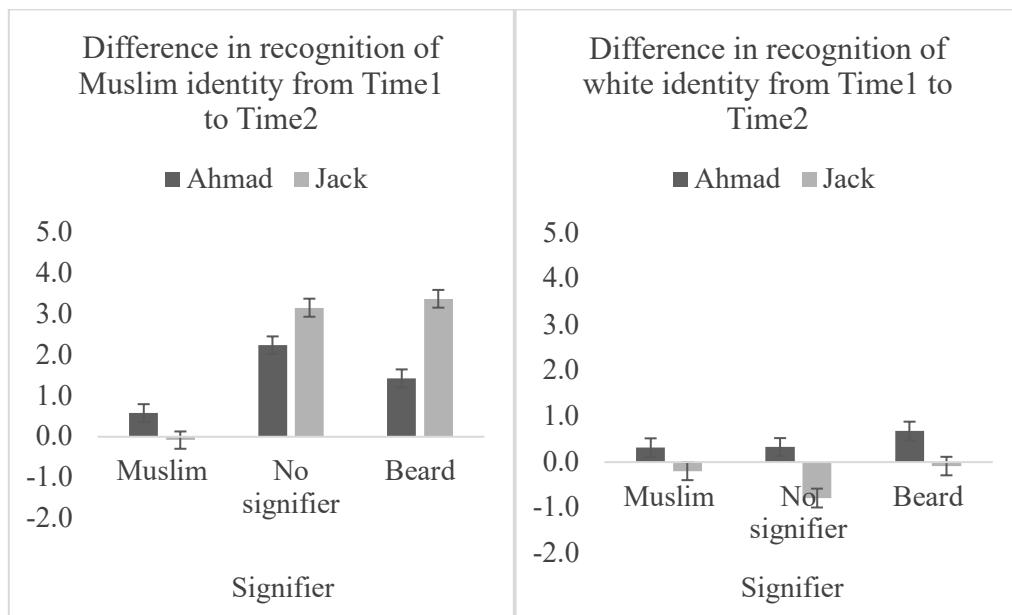
Similar to the previous studies, we analysed recognition differences between Time 2 and Time 1 of Muslim and white identity using a mixed design ANOVA in which Name and Signifier were entered as between-subject variable whereas white-Muslim-recognition differences as a within-subjects factor. A sensitivity analysis indicated that the sample size of 350 participants can detect effects as small as  $F=.10$ .

There was main effect of white-Muslim-recognition differences  $F(1, 343) = 269.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .440$  which was qualified with an interaction with Name  $F(1, 343) = 52.11, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .132$  as well as with Signifier  $F(2, 343) = 59.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .257$ . This main effect and secondary interactions were qualified with a three-way interaction between Name X Signifier X white-Muslim-recognition differences  $F(2, 343) = 16.61, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .088$ .

As can be seen in Figure 6.6, after the white Muslim identity revelation, participants in the No Signifier condition as well as in the Beard condition (but not in the Muslim condition) recognised Jack as more Muslim than Ahmed  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 343)$

$= 8.91, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .025, 95\% \text{ CI } [.31, 1.52], F_{\text{beard}}(1, 343) = 39.53, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .103, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.34, 2.56]$ . In the Muslim condition, however, Jack was recognised as less Muslim than Ahmed  $F(1, 343) = 4.69, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.26, -.061]$ .

With respect to white-identity recognition, Jack was recognised as less white than Ahmed in No Signifier and Beard conditions, and marginally significant in the Muslim condition,  $F_{\text{no signifier}}(1, 343) = 15.23, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .043, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.68, -.55], F_{\text{beard}}(1, 343) = 7.01, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .020, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.33, -.20], F_{\text{Muslim}}(1, 343) = 3.26, p = .072, \eta_p^2 = .009, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.07, .05]$ .



**Figure 6.6** Interaction between name, signifier and white-Muslim recognition differences in Experiment 2a. Recognition differences describe the difference between recognising the target's identity before and after the target reveals his White Muslim identity and were calculated by subtracting recognition Time 1 from recognition Time 2. Higher values indicate more recognition.

Within-subject comparisons revealed that in the No Signifier and the Beard condition (but not in the Muslim condition), Ahmed was recognised as more Muslim than white after revealing his white-Muslim identity  $F_{\text{no signifier}}(1, 343) = 57.20, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .143, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.42, 2.42], F_{\text{beard}}(1, 343) = 8.03, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .023, 95\% \text{ CI } [.23, 1.27]$ . Jack was also recognised as more Muslim than white yet to a larger extent

than Ahmed  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 343) = 222.32, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .393, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.43, 4.47]$ ,

$F_{beard}(1, 343) = 177.56, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .341, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.95, 3.98]$ .

### ***Discussion***

These results show how the beard acts as an ambiguous marker of religious identity for white Muslim men and thus mirrors the patterns we see in the English name and No Signifier condition. This is consistent with previous findings about the beard when used as a marker of Muslimness among white British Muslims (Amer, 2020). Not only do we see that where there is ambiguous or no markers of ‘otherness’ the target’s common ingroup identity (white) is recognised but his outgroup identity is not (Muslim), but also that members of the dominant ingroup downgrade the whiteness of the target after their seemingly incompatible identity is revealed. What is more, the target’s Muslimness increases in these instances, placing the target firmly in the outgroup.

This brings up some interesting questions regarding identity salience, markers and recognition from the relevant other that belongs to the target’s minority ingroup. If the beard is seen as an ambiguous marker by white British non-Muslims, how is it interpreted by non-white British Muslims? And how does this shape recognition after the multiplicity of the target’s identity is revealed? The final experiment considers these questions by looking at identity recognition of white British Muslim men by non-white British Muslims.

### **Experiment 2b**

Experiment 2b used the same design as Experiment 2a (male target) to explore identity recognition of white British Muslim men, with the only difference being the that the participants were non-white British Muslims. Based on the findings of previous

literature (Amer, 2020) and on the findings of Experiment 2a, we would predict that the beard would once again not be seen as a marker of religious identity and thus in the absence of additional qualifying religious markers the target would be recognised as white but not as Muslim (as would be the case in absence of any religious markers or signifiers). Where the target's religious identity is visible however, their Muslim identity would be recognised while their whiteness less so.

In relation to the target's identity recognition after its multiplicity is revealed, as noted above in Experiment 1b, the complex ways in which white British Muslims are seen by minority groups, at times having their identities recognised, while at other times having their identities denied (Amer, 2020), makes predicting the results of this experiment more difficult. Indeed, while previous studies consider the role of distinctiveness threat as important for minority groups (Warner et al., 2007), Experiment 1b found there to be no interaction between markers, identity revelation and feelings of threat or negativity. Thus, through this next experiment we add further clarity to the conditions under which identity markers influence the minority ingroup's recognition of and reactions to the identities of white British Muslim men. In doing so, we also consider the similarities and/or differences between how these processes play out for white Muslim men and women.

### ***Method***

#### Participants

A total of 200 participants completed the study (69 via snowballing and through advertising on social media and 121 via Prolific). The data was filtered to exclude non-Muslim participants ( $N = 9$ ), participants aged under 18 or had not reported their age ( $N = 5$ ), those who defined as 'White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish)' or 'White

other background' (N = 13) and those who failed the manipulation check (N = 5). The final sample was N = 168 (118 females, 50 males). Participants were aged between 18 and 61 ( $M = 27.39$ ,  $SD = 8.32$ ). Most participants were 'Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)' (N = 112), and the remaining were 'Asian other background' (N = 8), 'Black (African, Caribbean, other Black background' (N = 8), 'Arab/Middle Eastern' (N = 12), 'Mixed/Multiple ethnic group' (N = 25) or did not specify (N = 3).

Once again, there was a lower sample size compared to Experiments 1a and 2a because of the hard to reach group. A sensitivity analysis was nevertheless carried out (using G\*power; (Faul et al., 2007)) which indicated that final sample size provides power of  $1-\beta = .80$  and  $\alpha = .05$  to detect effects as small as  $F = .32$ .

#### Materials and procedure

Participants received similar instruction as in the previous studies. As in Experiment 2b, participants were randomly assigned to cells of a design of 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, no signifiers, Beard) between-subjects design.

#### Measures

The same measures were used as with Experiment 1a. Below, in table 6.6 we report the factors for the relevant measures.

**Table 6.6** Alphas of measures for Experiment 2b

Measure	$\alpha$
<i>Negative affect</i>	.871
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	.472 <sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> We note that the alpha for distinctiveness threat is very low, despite this being a well-established measure. We must therefore be cautious in our interpretation of the results that are based on this measure.

## Results

There was no difference in the extent to which male and female participants found the target to be attractive  $t(166) = .55, p = .59$  which rules out any gender effect caused by using a male stimulus in the experiment. A table of means and standard deviations for all conditions across the measures is provided below (Table 6.7).

**Table 6.7** Means and standard deviations of target conditions, Study 2b, N=168

	<i>Jack</i>		<i>Ahmed</i>			
	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beard</i>	<i>No signifier</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Beard</i>
<i>Invitation acceptance</i>	4.32 (1.73)	4.93 (1.59)	4.16 (1.34)	4.43 (1.286)	4.67 (1.68)	4.57 (1.64)
<i>Recognition-Time1</i>						
<i>British</i>	4.96 (1.22)	5.02 (1.49)	5.03 (1.318)	4.57 (1.52)	5.11 (1.42)	4.43 (1.35)
<i>Muslim</i>	2.45 (1.03)	5.70 (1.77)	2.38 (.99)	3.74 (1.44)	5.81 (1.68)	4.64 (1.48)
<i>white</i>	6.79 (.49)	6.38 (1.27)	4.47 (1.14)	5.87 (1.49)	5.96 (1.58)	5.13 (1.73)
<i>Recognition-Time2</i>						
<i>white</i>	6.00 (1.44)	6.18 (1.26)	6.38 (1.17)	6.20 (1.31)	6.28 (1.46)	5.80 (1.66)
<i>British</i>	5.80 (1.60)	5.84 (1.60)	6.02 (1.49)	5.89 (1.65)	6.23 (1.52)	6.75 (1.72)
<i>Muslim</i>	5.61 (1.60)	5.62 (1.81)	5.76 (1.57)	5.98 (1.34)	6.39 (1.24)	6.07 (1.42)
<i>Recognition difference-white</i>	-.79 (1.52)	-.47 (1.39)	-.09 (1.41)	.33 (1.42)	.32 (1.61)	.68 (1.81)
<i>Recognition difference-British</i>	.84 (2.05)	.82 (2.01)	.98 (1.87)	1.31 (1.20)	1.12 (1.85)	1.32 (1.95)
<i>Recognition difference-Muslim</i>	3.16 (1.55)	-.08 (1.41)	2.42 (1.90)	2.25 (1.97)	.58 (1.69)	1.43 (1.73)
<i>Distinctiveness threat</i>	3.23 (1.28)	3.13 (1.17)	3.15 (1.13)	3.08 (1.30)	3.00 (1.39)	2.96 (1.61)
<i>Negative affect</i>	1.75 (1.15)	1.55 (.99)	1.64 (1.06)	1.70 (1.05)	1.43 (.82)	1.71 (1.20)

### *Dependent variables Time1: recognition*

A main effect for Name at Time 1 was found on recognition as Muslim  $F(1, 162) = 95.23, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .370$  and as white  $F(1, 162) = 43.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .212$ . A main

effect of Signifier at Time 1 emerged on recognition as Muslim  $F(2, 162) = 29.76, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .269$  and as white  $F(2, 162) = 12.62, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .135$ .

These main effects were qualified with a Name X Signifiers interaction on recognition Time 1 as Muslim  $F(2, 162) = 11.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .125$  and as white  $F(2, 162) = 5.59, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .065$ . Participants in the No Signifier and the Beard conditions (but not in the Muslim condition) recognised Ahmed as more Muslim than Jack,  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 162) = 68.80, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .298$ , 95% CI [2.36, 3.84];  $F_{beard}(1, 162) = 52.07, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .243$ , 95% CI [2.14, 3.74]. As for recognising the target as white, participants in all the signifier conditions recognised Jack as more white than Ahmed but this, as can be seen, was particularly more pronounced in the Beard condition  $F_{muslim}(1, 162) = 6.92, p = .009 \eta_p^2 = .041$ , 95% CI [.20, 1.43],  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 162) = 5.39, p = .021 \eta_p^2 = .032$ , 95% CI [.10, 1.22],  $F_{beard}(1, 162) = 40.56, p < .001 \eta_p^2 = .200$ , 95% CI [1.36, 2.59].

#### *Differences between Time1 and Time2: White-Muslim-recognition*

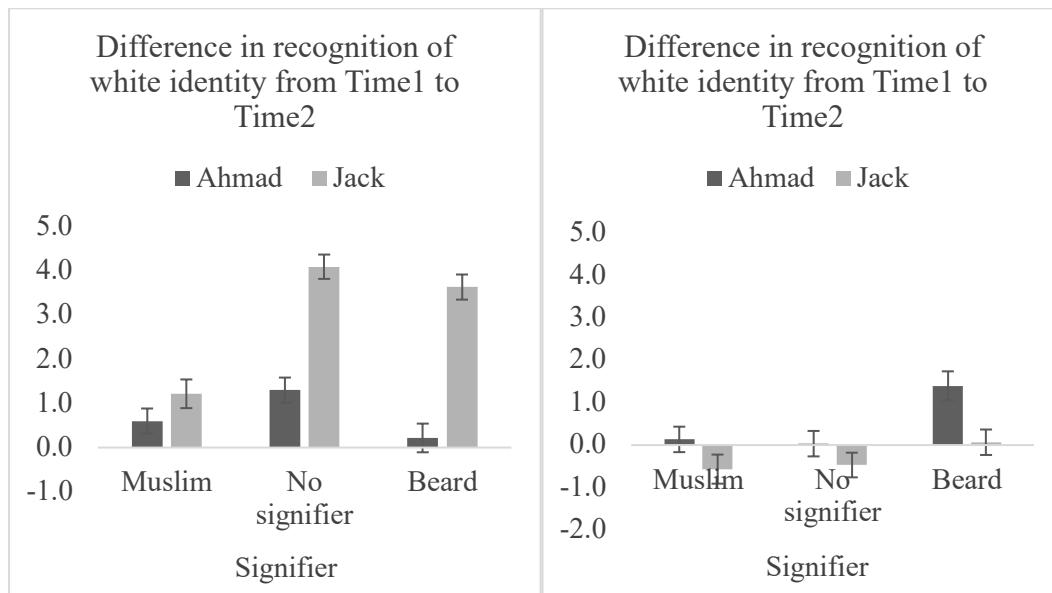
For analysing the interaction effect between Name and Signifiers on the differences in recognition as white and Muslim at Time2 (after the target revealed their white-Muslim identity) compared with Time 1, we conducted a mixed-design ANOVA in which the former was entered as a between-subjects factor while the latter as a within-subjects factor. A sensitivity analysis indicated that the sample size of 168 participants can detect effects as small as  $F = .14$ .

A main effect of Muslim-white-recognition difference was found  $F(1, 162) = 103.07, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .389$  which significantly interacted with Name  $F(1, 162) = 82.22, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .337$  as well as Signifiers  $F(2, 162) = 12.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .132$ . This main effect and secondary interactions were qualified with a three-way interaction  $F(2, 162) = 7.90, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .089$ .

Participants in the No Signifier and the Beard conditions (see Figure 6.7)

recognised Jack as more Muslim than Ahmed (but not significantly in the Muslim condition),  $F_{no\ signifier}(1, 162) = 49.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .235, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.01, 3.57]$ ,  $F_{beard}(1, 162) = 62.62, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .279, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.56, 4.27]$ , and as less white than Ahmed in the Beard condition (but not significantly in the Muslim and No Signifier conditions),  $F(1, 162) = 8.50, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .050, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.22, -.43]$ .

Similarly, participants recognised Jack as more Muslim than white in the Muslim condition  $F(1, 162) = 14.99, p < .001 \eta_p^2 = .085, 95\% \text{ CI } [.87, 2.69]$ , but more so in the No Signifier condition  $F(1, 162) = 136.63, p < .001 \eta_p^2 = .458, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.79, 5.33]$  and the Beard condition  $F(1, 162) = 78.28, p < .001 \eta_p^2 = .326, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.77, 4.36]$ . For Ahmed, participants recognised him as more Muslim than white in the No Signifier condition  $F(1, 162) = 9.87, p = .002 \eta_p^2 = .057, 95\% \text{ CI } [.47, 2.06]$ . In the Beard condition, however, Ahmed was recognised more as white than as Muslim  $F(1, 162) = 6.50, p = .012 \eta_p^2 = .039, 95\% \text{ CI } [.27, 2.08]$ .



**Figure 6.7** Interaction between Name, Signifier and white-Muslim recognition differences in Experiment 2b. Recognition differences describe the difference between recognising the target's identity before and after the target reveals their white Muslim identity and were calculated by subtracting recognition Time 1 from recognition Time 2. Higher values indicate more recognition.

### ***Discussion***

In relation to identity recognition of white British Muslim male identity by their fellow British Muslim ingroup member, the findings highlight the way in which the beard is an ambiguous marker of Muslim identity where there are no other religious markers or signifiers (e.g. Arabic name) even for other Muslims. Thus, in the condition where the target has a beard along with an English name (vs. Arabic name) the target's white identity is recognised while his Muslim identity is not, in the same way that identity recognition played out in the no religious signifier condition.

We also see how the absence of Muslim markers or signifiers (English name and no religious signifiers) results in the target's white identity being recognised less than the target's Muslim identity when his white British Muslim identity is revealed. Consequently, this provides strong evidence for the absence of religious identity markers and signifiers being responsible for the downgrading of the white identity of both the female and male target. What is interesting in relation to patterns of recognition however is how this process played out in the beard conditions after the target's full identity is revealed. While in the English name and Beard condition the target's Muslim identity recognition increases as a result of his identity revelation, the recognition of his white identity stays about the same. Thus, perhaps the beard becomes interpreted as a marker of religiosity and religious identity, and, as a result, is rewarded for his expression of his Muslimness through recognising his other identities. Indeed, as the target with the Arabic name and beard reveals his multifaceted identity, while his Muslim identity recognition stays about the same (because it is clear through his name coupled with the beard), the recognition of his white identity increases. Again, perhaps as a result of his clear Muslim identity markers and performative signifiers, he is rewarded through the recognition of his multiple identities.

## **General Discussion: Overall findings and their implications**

This paper set out to explore the role of identity markers and signifiers on the recognition of multiple, seemingly incompatible identities and to consider the possible consequences this has on intragroup relations through their effect on participant intentions for interaction. It also considered whether multiple identities were recognised by relevant others when explicitly stated, or if intergroup distinctiveness became threatened. Four experiments were designs; Experiments 1a and 1b explored identity recognition of white British Muslim women (female target), and Experiments 2a and 2b explored these dynamics white British Muslim men (male target). What is more, Experiments 1a and 2a explored this by focusing on recognition by white British non-Muslims (majority ingroup), while Experiments 1b and 2b looked at non-white British Muslims (minority ingroup). The findings of these experiments provide some food for thought in relation to the role of identity markers and signifiers on the recognition of multiple, seemingly incompatible, identities by relevant others. We see interesting patterns in not only how markers and signifiers influence recognition differently across genders, but also how *who* the relevant other is (dominant majority ingroup or minority ingroup) influences which identities come to be recognised and which do not, as well as drawing on connections as to why this is the case.

The experiments highlight how regardless of who the relevant other is (majority or minority ingroup), for white British Muslim women an Arabic name and/or the hijab (Experiments 1a and 1b) is a strong signifier of their Muslim identity, often resulting in their whiteness becoming less visible and thus not recognised. We therefore see the power of markers and signifiers in the “over-visibility” of some identities, increasing their salience and resulting in other identities being overlooked (Blackwood et al., 2015;

Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Reicher et al., 2010; Renault, 2009; Turner et al., 1987). For white Muslim men however (Experiments 2a and 2b), while an Arabic name acted as a marker of Muslimness, the beard was too ambiguous to be interpreted as a marker of their Muslim identity when there were no other religious cues to support it. Thus, consistent with previous findings, we see how identity recognition is experienced differently across gender, with the absence of clear religious markers among Muslim men resulting in their identities as Muslim not being recognised (Amer, 2020). This can be both beneficial and detrimental to experiences of belonging, because the criteria for inclusion within a group differ depending on the group itself. As Amer (2020) notes, the absence of clear or visible markers of Muslimness can be beneficial in predominately non-Muslim spaces where the awareness of their Muslim identity by others could cause them harm, distress or marginalisation. However, their absence is less useful when among other Muslims as they have a bearing on the level of acceptance into the ingroup. Our findings into behavioural intention are important to mention in relation to this. While identity markers and signifiers interacted with each other to influence majority ingroup members' willingness to engage with the white British Muslim female target (participants were more likely to accept the invitation when the target was known to be Muslim and her name was Fatima compared to when her name was Emily), no significant results were found in the other experiments (female target and minority ingroup as well as male targets and both majority and minority ingroups). Based on these findings, while we can conclude that generally recognition and behavioural intention did not correlate and therefore do not have a connection in this instance, further studies need to be conducted into the possible connection between recognition and behavioural intention.

It is when the multiple identities of the targets are revealed that patterns of recognition become most interesting. Among fellow majority ingroup members

(Experiments 1a and 2a), where clear markers of the target's 'otherness', i.e. Muslimness, are absent (for both male and female white British Muslims), the revelation of being Muslim led to an increase in the recognition of their Muslim identity which, prior to the revelation, was not salient. In turn however, their recognition as white (the shared ingroup) was reduced. Thus, rather than having both their multiple identities affirmed by their majority ingroup we instead see that they are seen as *more* Muslim and *less* white as a result of this revelation. Such experiences of identity erasure could have serious implications on one's sense of self, and while the current paper does not explore the effects of this, by turning to other research we see how the lack of recognition or indeed the denial of an identity can be harmful, reducing one's mode of being and can lead to attempts through agentic means to achieve acceptance and affirmation (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2013; Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Taylor, 1994).

In order to understand the processes at play here and why this reduced recognition occurs, we consider literature on the 'black sheep effect' whereby ingroup members that go against the norms, values and behaviours associated with a shared identity group are seen as threatening (Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Jacques-Philippe, 1988; Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). This is particularly the case with ingroups that are seen to be dominant and powerful, for the blurring of these boundaries could have very high stakes. In the case of white British Muslims, dominant majority group members can interpret their being Muslim (usually through conversion) as a violation, decreasing intergroup distinctiveness (see also Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000). Thus, in an attempt to preserve the group's credentials, a positive sense of group identity, and its status within a context, the individual can be cast out entirely or placed at the periphery of the ingroup. Literature on impostors – defined as people making claims to an identity while not fully disclosing

their failure to meet key criteria of the group (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003) – overlaps somewhat with the ‘black sheep effect’. Although we must note that white British Muslims are not impostors, they may be seen as such as a result of perceptions of incompatibility between being Muslim and being white (Amer, 2020; Amer & Howarth, 2018; Hutchison, Lubna, Goncalves-Portelinha, Kamali, & Khan, 2015; Moosavi, 2015b; D. Phillips, 2006). Indeed, previous research on conversion to Islam has noted how white Muslims are often seen as traitors to their culture, heritage and nationality (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Moosavi, 2015a; D. Phillips, 2006; Suleiman, 2013). Thus, the absence of Muslim identity can be interpreted as a concealment their Muslimness, instead ‘masquerading’ as prototypical members of the white ingroup. Hornsey and Jetten (2003) conducted a study on impostorship focusing on vegetarians and the level of negativity towards a target who was caught eating meat. They found that highly identifying vegetarians not only experienced more negative affect towards the target than low identifiers but saw them as more harmful to the group and demoted their likeability. Impostors were also found to blur intergroup boundaries, which mediated the group’s negative evaluation of them (e.g. Jetten, Summerville, Hornsey, & Mewse, 2005; Warner, Hornsey, & Jetten, 2007). This is reflected in our own findings, whereby not only the absence of markers or signifiers of Muslim identity led to more threat to intergroup distinctiveness, but it also mediated feelings of negativity towards the target. As the Social Identity Approach notes, the definition of a given group is often based on who it is not, thus a group’s distinctiveness is important in order to differentiate itself from others (Haslam, 2004; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1999; Reicher et al., 2012, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Therefore, when group members feel their distinctiveness is being threatened by behaviours that blur the groups boundaries they attempt to reinstate the intergroup differences and parameters by distancing themselves from these individuals, expelling them from the group or placing them at the margins

(Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Jetten et al., 2005; Reicher et al., 2010). In turn, dominant majority groups can at times essentialise group boundaries in order to protect their position, power and status within constructions of ‘us and them’ (Roberts, Ho, Rhodes, & Gelman, 2017).

Interestingly however, for majority ingroup members, both English and Arabic named female targets with a hijab were seen to be *more* white than Muslim after their multiple identities were revealed. With both targets displaying clear markers of ‘otherness’, their increased white identity recognition could be interpreted as an acceptance of the target into the ingroup, on the part of the perceivers (white British non-Muslims). Explaining why this takes place however proves to be complicated. One possible explanation could be that despite the markers of their Muslim identities, in declaring themselves as white, such an act is at the very least seen as being more in line with the perceivers’ ingroup norm (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003). Thus it becomes a reassuring act of their belongingness to the white group despite showing markers of an incompatible (Muslim) identity and signals that the target sees herself still as a group member and has not defected from her group (see Levine & Moreland, 2002; Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). Nevertheless, what this highlights is that more research needs to be conducted in order to understand this further and to be able to unpick the nuances of not only the processes, but also the circumstances of recognition.

As with majority ingroup members (experiments 1a and 2a), similar patterns in relation to recognition after their identity multiplicity was actively revealed were seen among participants who were minority ingroup members (non-white British Muslims, Experiments 1b and 2b). Where no markers of their belonging to the minority group were present to make this membership salient (e.g. English name, no signifiers), after their multifaceted identities were revealed, the recognition of their minority group membership (Muslim) increased, while recognition of their dominant majority group

membership (white) decreased. Previous findings on white British Muslims have demonstrated the way in which allegiance to the minority group through visible and performative markers is seen to be important (Amer, 2020). This research notes that white Muslims felt they were expected by other Muslims to shed markers of their white identity and instead adopt a new cultural identity that reflected the culture of their local Muslim community. Thus, what appears to be at play here is how the ability to ‘pass’ as a non-member of a minority or stigmatised group is not looked upon favourably and thus individuals are ‘punished’ through the denial of their identity membership to the dominant majority (see DeJordy, 2008; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Schlossberg, 2001 for more on passing). Indeed, as Hornsey and Jetten (2003, p.655) note, “attempts by a group member to disguise their stigmatised minority group status might be seen by other group members as an expression of shame, or at the very least an individualistic way of circumnavigating group-based disadvantage” and are thus, judged more harshly. Furthermore, within a context where Muslims are under a constant fear of surveillance and infiltration it is not surprising too that such individuals may be looked upon with suspicion (Suleiman, 2013). Thus, the need to prove their membership and their solidarity with the group almost becomes a necessity.

In line with this, where markers of Muslimness were clear (for both genders), the multifaceted-ness of the target’s identity was recognised by Muslim participants, with their white identity recognition increasing after its explicit revelation. As previous research notes, while at times white Muslims are expected to shed their whiteness, they are also often celebrated for being white and Muslim, ‘put on a pedestal’ and seen as the ‘ultimate prize’ (Amer, 2020; Suleiman, 2013). More specifically however, this adds credence to the conclusions that what is important for minority groups is that performative allegiances to the group are required for full recognition to take place. Indeed, as the minority membership of these targets were visibly and verbally evident

(through the hijab or an Arabic name) or were qualified through other means (e.g. the ambiguous beard becoming a marker of piety by vocalising Muslim identity) their recognition as both white British and Muslim becomes affirmed. The notion of identity incompatibility does not come into play for British Muslims as they themselves are often all too aware of the barriers of acceptance they face that are grounded in such discourses (Blackwood et al., 2013). As a result, what becomes clear is the way in which stigmatised minority groups appear to be more open and accepting of complex identity constructions, albeit on the condition that the minoritised and/or stigmatised identities are visible and clear.

This paper has made inroads into the connections between identity salience through the presence of markers, multiple identity assertion, processes of recognition and the way in which our identities interact shaping how we are seen by others. It sheds light on the power of identity markers, and how their presence can constrain the way in which identities are recognised (Amer, 2020; Blackwood et al., 2015; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Renault, 2009). What is more, it demonstrated how recognition plays out differently when done by dominant majority or marginalised minority ingroups. How blurring group boundaries and disrupting the meaning of categories can be either accepted or rejected depending on the cost to the status of the group and in turn the power they have over others. Therefore, while further research is no doubt needed in order to better understand the nuances and intricacies of the interplay between identity salience through markers/signifiers and recognition, what we see in this paper is how identity recognition is central to identity processes and in turn on intragroup dynamics. The affirmation of one's identity by others can determine our belonging to or our exclusion from the groups with which we identify, thus having serious implications of on our sense of self. This has broader and very real repercussions on our societies, for how processes of identity recognition play out can either lead to possible

essentialisation of categories, entrenching lines of difference that can harm and marginalise groups, or can broaden notions of acceptance and recognise our identities as increasingly complex, and at times, contradictory.

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## Chapter Seven: General Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore how people with multiple, seemingly incompatible identities experience them in relation to others and the consequences this has on feelings of belonging. The thesis did so by focusing on the experiences of white British Muslims in relation to how they are seen or not seen by relevant others (specifically members of their white British non-Muslim ingroup and non-white British Muslim ingroup). As has been noted throughout the thesis, white British Muslims make for an interesting group through which to explore these issues as they straddle membership of both a dominant majority (white British) and a marginalised minority (Muslim). These groups are often seen as incompatible, with Islam not only often being pitted as fundamentally at odds with being British but also contradictory with the notion of being ethnically white (Franks, 2000; Moosavi, 2015a).

The thesis has drawn on social psychological theories to demonstrate the importance of examining identities in conjunction with one another, as intersecting and interacting, rather than as separate or individual elements of ourselves. Crucial for understanding identities in this way is an acknowledgment of the context within which multiple identity categories exist, how they are perceived to ‘fit’ with one another by relevant others, and how this in turn shapes how they are experienced by those who embody them.

This thesis proposes that the somewhat under-researched concept of identity recognition becomes a useful construct through which to examine and understand contextually embedded experiences of identification. In doing so, it demonstrates how identity boundaries are perceived by others, and the implications this has for feelings of belonging. Identity recognition situates the role of others, particularly relevant others, as central to processes of identification, for it is how we are seen by others, and even how

we *think* we are seen, that influences the extent to which we feel we belong and the performative strategies we take on to attempt to be accepted by others.

In this final chapter of the thesis, the findings of the three empirical papers (Chapters Four, Five and Six) are first summarised before discussing how they can be drawn together to propose an integrative social psychological framework for understanding identification processes. In doing so, it acknowledges the importance of studying identities as contextual, interactional and intersectional, and incorporates identity recognition as central to developing our understanding of processes and experiences of identification, particularly in relation to boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, the chapter discusses the thesis' theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions, before concluding the thesis by revisiting its central research question.

## 7.1 Summary of the findings

The starting point of this thesis' empirical work was an exploration of the social representations of white British Muslims found in both British mainstream and British Muslim newspapers (Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018). The second empirical paper focused on the subjective experiences of white British Muslims themselves and how they felt their identities were recognised (or indeed mis- or not recognised) by relevant others and how they negotiated their identities as a result through strategic identity performance (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020). Finally, the third paper examined actual identity recognition of white British Muslim identities by relevant others (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). It examined how identity salience through markers and signifiers influenced identity recognition and behavioural intention towards

the target as well as the extent to which identity multiplicity was recognised after the full identity of the target was revealed.

The findings of the first paper (Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018) showed how discourses of threat in relation to white British Muslims were not found in British Muslim newspapers. Rather, there was a focus on the detailed reporting of events or an active emphasis that notions of threat were not associated with specific ethnicities or religions. In mainstream British newspapers however, white British Muslims were generally depicted as a security threat as well as a social and cultural threat. Such constructions of threat were framed mainly as a result of their Muslim identities, however there were also instances where the threat they posed was contested, particularly when gender was considered. Namely, there appeared to be more room for deliberation and discussion about the extent of threat posed in relation to female white British Muslims. What is more, in other instances, white British Muslims were represented as non-threatening. Within these discursive constructions their white and British identities were emphasised, thus positioning them as closer to the dominant ingroup. Such constructions emerged because of the presence of a more dangerous and threatening ‘other’, namely, British Muslims of Arab or South Asian ethnic heritage.

The findings of this study bring to light the complex and contradicting representations that exist about white British Muslims. How their identities were discursively constructed depended on a number of factors; the source of the representation (dominant or marginal), the gender of the subject (female or male) and the agenda of the specific narrative (are they the threat or is there a more threatening ‘other’?). The first empirical paper also illustrates how power within social structures plays an important role in the dissemination of representations, whereby predominantly negative representations distributed via more mainstream channels continue to have a broader reach compared to the more inclusive and non-demonising language used by

British Muslim press. This paper shows how the identities of white British Muslims interact, influencing and shaping the lens through which they are seen and understood by others. Whiteness and Muslimness were generally seen as at odds with one another, causing tension and disrupting the social order of identities, their position and their status. However, what impact does this have on white British Muslims? Inevitably such contextually available constructions of their identities must influence and shape experiences of identification and have implications on feelings of belonging. Following on, the second empirical paper of this thesis sought out to explore how white British Muslims think they are seen by others and how this influences the strategies they employ to negotiate and manage their identities as a result.

Based on interview data, the second empirical paper (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020) demonstrated how the identities of white British Muslims interact and intersect in context in relation, and in reaction, to dominant narratives of identity incompatibility, understandings of 'fit' or perceived lack of 'fit'. These narratives shaped how their multiple identities were perceived to be recognised by relevant others, for where one identity was recognised, the other was often not. The study also showed how identity salience, through the absence or presence of religious markers, influenced how their identities were seen. Where markers of Muslimness were not present (e.g. having an Arabic name, wearing a hijab) their white identities would be perceived to be recognised, but their Muslim identities would not. Conversely, where markers of their Muslim identities were present, their Muslim identities would be recognised, while their ethnic identities became misrecognised as non-white or actively denied.

As a result, white British Muslims sought various ways to manage their identities across contexts where different relevant others were present. When among non-Muslims and/or white British people, participants described consciously suppressing markers of their Muslim identities in order to avoid possible discomfort, discrimination

or feeling excluded. In this way, they were willing to forgo the recognition of their Muslim identities in such instances in order to be accepted as a part of the ingroup. Gender identities often intersected with identity management strategies, with men finding it easier to ‘pass’ as non-Muslim because of the absence or ambiguity of visible religious requirements (e.g. the beard as a marker of religious identity could also be seen a marker of being fashionable and trendy). Thus, although some women described removing the hijab, for example, in order to not be seen as Muslim, there was an awareness of the notion of ‘passing’ being much more complex for them. When among Muslims, both male and female participants described over-performing their Muslim identities in order for their acceptance into, and recognition as part of, the contextual ingroup. Alongside this, while at times their white identities were felt to be recognised by other Muslims, at other times they felt there was an expectation to suppress their white identities as part of a performative expression of commitment to the minority ingroup.

In summary, the findings of the second paper brought out the importance of understanding identities not only as cognitive constructs but also as ways of being and acting, where the performance and the use of markers in context shapes which identities are ‘seen’ and which are not. This paper thus highlights the centrality of identity recognition to understanding experiences of identification whereby the costs or benefits of recognition (or indeed misrecognition or its denial) are weighed up and shape performative strategies. What is also insightful was how participants asserted their multiple and intersecting identities when experiencing or anticipating misrecognition and denial based on perceptions of incompatibility. They did so despite the possible cost to belonging and acceptance. As such, these acts of assertion did not necessarily ensure recognition, but rather were agentic strategies that enabled white British Muslims to remain true to themselves.

As the second empirical paper explored the subjective experience of identity recognition and performative management, the final empirical paper of the thesis (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation) considered the actual identity recognition of white British Muslims by relevant others who inhabit one of the two groups that these individuals identify with (white British non-Muslim majority or non-white British Muslim minority). It explored the role of religious identity salience on the recognition given by relevant others through manipulating the presence and absence of markers and signifiers (e.g. Arabic or English name, presence or absence of hijab/beard, religious identity is stated or not stated). It also examined the consequences this had on behavioural intentions for interaction towards the target group and considered whether the explicit revelation of the multiple and seemingly contradictory identities of white British Muslims had an impact on the extent to which they were actually recognised as such.

The findings confirmed that for both majority (white British non-Muslims) and minority ingroup members (non-white British Muslims), religious identity salience influenced recognition of white British Muslim identities but had no effect on their intention for interaction with the target. More specifically, where clear markers or signifiers were present (e.g. Arabic name, the hijab for women or their religion was stated), the Muslim identities of white British Muslims were recognised while their white identities were not. However, where ambiguous religious markers were present (e.g. the beard for men) devoid of other confirmatory markers and signifiers (e.g. an Arabic name), their identity as Muslim was not recognised. Importantly, what is seen here is not only the effect of the presence or absence of religious markers and signifiers on identity recognition, but also how these dynamics at times played out differently depending on gender. In this way, it illustrates the importance of considering yet

another layer of identity complexity (the role of gender) on the consequences and intersectional experiences of recognition.

Interestingly, upon revealing the multiple identities of the white British Muslim targets, the findings highlight how the absence of clear religious identity markers and signifiers negatively impacted multiple identity recognition. Indeed, members of the majority ingroup (white British non-Muslims) recognised the target with no signifiers of their Muslim identity as less white after their Muslimness was revealed, and as threatening their intergroup distinctiveness. Thus, what this reflects is how white British Muslims are seen to blur the lines between social categories and general understandings of identity compatibility and incompatibility. Similar patterns were seen among minority ingroup members (non-white British Muslims). Again, where there was initially no marker or signifier of their religious identity the recognition of the target's whiteness reduced after their multiple identities were revealed. Possible explanations of this are different to those applied to the majority ingroup. Instead, this could be connected more with notions of 'punishment' by minority ingroups whereby the lack of explicit allegiance to the minority group and a possible avoidance of collective experiences of group-based disadvantages result in them being judged harshly. For indeed, if minority membership was previously salient through religious markers and signifiers (even when ambiguous) the multiple identities of white British Muslims as white and Muslim were equally recognised. In this way, the final empirical paper illustrates the connections between identity salience, the assertion of multiple, seemingly incompatible identities and processes of recognition. What is more, the paper demonstrates how recognition plays out differently for majority and minority ingroups, therefore a consideration of *who* the relevant other is becomes important for understanding recognition.

In bringing the findings of the thesis together, we see how each study builds on a different element shaping our understanding of how multiple, seemingly incompatible

identities are seen in relation to one another and come to be experienced by those who hold them. The findings highlight the role that recognition plays in identification processes and in strategies of identity management and negotiation, as well as the role that others plays in these dynamics. In the next section, these findings are discussed more broadly in relation to relevant literature and theory, emphasising the contributions they make to a more nuanced approach to studying multiple identities, processes of identification and their real-world implications on experiences of belonging.

## **7.2 Towards an integrative framework for understanding multiple identities**

### **7.2.1 Identities as intersectional, interactional and contextual**

Our complex social identities reflect the numerous groups to which we belong. They are multi-dimensional encompassing different identity categories (e.g. our occupation, sexuality, the football teams we support) as well as different groups within categories (e.g. having multiple national, cultural or ethnic identities), and may at times be seen to contradict and oppose one another. Yet, these identities also co-exist, interacting and intersecting, shaping our behaviour, how others see us and how our identities are experienced in context.

Through exploring the multiple, seemingly contradictory identities of white British Muslims, the findings of this thesis concur with the notion that identities need to be explored in conjunction with one another. The Social Identity Approach (SIA) is a particularly useful theory for tackling this challenge (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010). Despite some criticism of SIA's suitability for exploring identity multiplicity on the basis of its focus on one identity dimension at any given time (Ramarajan, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002), Haslam (2004) notes that the approach should not be treated

as one that is complete and fixed, but rather as one that always requires constant modification and expansion as more research is conducted.

A number of researchers have used SIA to examine multiple identities and have combined SIA with other theoretical approaches that at their core incorporate identity multiplicity and interconnectedness (e.g. Greenwood, 2012; Verkuyten et al., 2019).

This thesis too draws on the notion of identities as intersecting and interacting (Crenshaw, 1991; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006) and highlights how, at times, more than one identity category can be salient. For example, the identities of white British Muslims as both white and Muslim become equally important in constructing representations of threat about a more dangerous ‘other’ (Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018). In another example we see how their gender and religious identities intersect to shape how their religious and ethnic identities are seen by others (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020).

What is important also in relation to understanding multiple identities and experiences of them is how constructions of identity categories emerge in context. Indeed, how we see ourselves, our social identities and how we see others cannot be detached from the social context in which we are in (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). As Howarth and colleagues (2013) note, identities are contextual – they are produced within contexts, are sharpened by contexts and may even come to influence the context itself.

SIA provides a framework that allows us to take note of the interplay of social and political factors with processes of identification within a given context, shaping the way in which identity categories are seen to ‘fit’ or contradict with one another (Reicher, 2004). However, how representational frameworks of identity categories and their meaning come to be constructed and embedded in context needs to be considered. To do so, this thesis drew on Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1972,

2001), for it considers how knowledge is socially constructed, reconstructed and indeed contested through communicative exchange between individuals in context. It also notes the crucial role that power plays in knowledge construction and how it has consequences of *whose* representations and world-views (e.g. in relation to the meaning of identity categories and their compatibility or incompatibility with others) come to be more prominent than others (Howarth & Andreouli, 2014; Jovchelovitch, 1997; Phoenix et al., 2017). Discursive strategies used to create, ratify and challenge representations in context become a useful angle through which to explore representations and the process of representing in action (van Dijk, 2006b). In Chapter Four of this thesis (Amer & Howarth, 2018), the language used in constructions of the level of threat white British Muslims pose creates, maintains and challenges dominant representations of the group and what comes to be known as ‘truths’, with power playing a central role in this.

While there are possibilities for contestation (as seen in Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018; see also Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011; Howarth, 2006; Moscovici, 1985; Sammut & Bauer, 2011), those with more power have the access to channels that allow their ways of making sense of the world to be more widely spread and hegemonised, essentialising identity categories, demarcating boundaries which specify who is included or excluded (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Hall, 1997; Howarth, 2006a, 2014; Howarth, Andreouli, & Kessi, 2014). Moreover, as is seen in the findings of this thesis, dominant racialised representations of Islam and Muslims as being fundamentally at odds with what it means to be white and British trickles down to the everyday experiences of identity recognition (e.g. Chapter Five; Amer, 2020; see also Breen & Meer, 2019; Franks, 2000; Galonnier, 2015; Hutchison, Lubna, Goncalves-Portelinha, Kamali, & Khan, 2015; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a; Meer, 2013; Meer & Modood, 2011; Phillips, 2006). The recognition of one identity (e.g. ethnic) often resulted in mis- or even nonrecognition of another (e.g. religious) thus having serious and important

implications of experiences of belonging (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020; Chapter Six; Amer & Halabi, in preparation). Indeed, recognition has proved to be a useful way through which to understand processes of identity, identification and their multiplicity. It highlights the central role that others play in how these processes play out, for our identities are just as much about how others see us as they are about how we see ourselves in relation to others (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010). In the next section, the importance of incorporating recognition into a framework for the examination of identities is discussed, and how as a concept it enables for an approach that acknowledges identities as contextual, interactional and intersectional.

### **7.2.2 The role of recognition and identity performance**

As Mead (1934) notes, the development of the self is inextricably embedded within self-other relations. Thus, our identities are just as much about the verification of our membership to groups by others as they are about our identification with these groups (Duveen, 2001). In fact, it can be argued that how others see us is even more important for identification processes (Taylor, 1994). Recognition, defined as the affirmation of one's identity by others (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) becomes a useful concept through which to make central the role of others and how they see us, be that actual (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs in preparation) or perceived (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020), in theorisations of identity-related processes. This includes how experiences of recognition shape identity management strategies.

While as a concept it is not explicit within theory on identities in social psychology, there has been some research conducted that acknowledges the role that recognition plays in our identity construction and negotiation. These have examined the concept through the Social Identity Approach (SIA; Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2013, 2015; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Parallels can also be drawn from an array of

literature including identity threat and miscategorisation (Branscombe et al., 1999), identity ascription (Pehrson & Green, 2010; Reddy & Gleibs, 2019) and identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Townsend et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2013). Thus, the concept of recognition becomes a useful way to bring much of this research together that acknowledges the role of others, and how they see us, in shaping identity experiences. Indeed, where our identities are not recognised as a result of salient markers and signifiers of identity that trigger stereotypical assumptions or indeed explicit and active denial (termed nonrecognition; Amer, 2020) it can lead to very real repercussions on intra- and intergroup relations, feelings of belonging and threats to an individual's self-concept (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Taylor, 1994). This brings us back to the importance of considering the role of power asymmetries in identification processes, where a positive self-concept is heavily reliant on the affirmation of one's identity by others (Brah & Phoenix, 2004).

Nevertheless, this is not to say that individuals cannot enact their agency to go some way in challenging experiences of mis/nonrecognition. SIA states that we strive for a positive sense of self, thus we draw on strategies of identity management to fulfil this aim (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 1979). Similarly, the findings of the thesis demonstrates how identity performance, defined as conscious expression or suppression of identities through performative acts such as dress or verbalisation, is used as an agentic tool to regain some sense of control over how one is seen by others (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Klein et al., 2007). These acts of resistance to how one's identities are misrecognised or denied attempt to flip contextual power dynamics, strategically manipulating which identities come to be recognised or not recognised on one's own terms (Coulthard, 2014). As part of this, individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of consciously orchestrating their identity recognition or misrecognition, considering the specifics of the contexts in which they are in and who the relevant other

is within these contexts (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020). In this way, recognition and performance are intricately linked and play out in a cyclical way. How identities are seen, or perceived to be seen, by others, influence experiences of identity recognition. These experiences shape performative strategies taken on by individuals, which in turn, can influence how identities may be recognised and experienced.

However, identity performance, particularly where identity multiplicity is asserted does not always guarantee an alignment between how we see ourselves and how others see us. As mentioned above, contextual understandings of how multiple identities ‘fit’ and relate to one another matters, shaping experiences of (mis/non)recognition (Héliot et al., 2019). Moreover, who the relevant other is within a given context and what the implications are for *their own* positive sense of self and understanding of group boundaries can also play a significant role in spite of performative expressions of identity multiplicity (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). Thus, in understanding identity processes through the concept of recognition we are able to grasp some of the nuances and intricacies of how identities play out in context, are experienced in context, and indeed are negotiated in context. It places the role of relevant others as central to all these dynamics and as such, it becomes a useful way through which to understand much of what theorisations of identity can encompass.

### **7.3 Thesis contributions and future directions**

This thesis makes three main contributions, two of which are theoretical and one empirical;

- 1) it demonstrates the value gained from studying multiple identities as intersecting and interacting in context, particularly in relation to understandings of compatibility and/or incompatibility.
- 2) it highlights how recognition and in turn identity performance are central to processes of identification and emphasises it as a useful concept through which to examine them.
- 3) it makes an original contribution to social psychological research through its empirical focus on white British Muslims.

The thesis also brings to the fore some methodological considerations that are discussed later, but first its main contributions to theory are discussed in more detail.

### **7.3.1 Contributions to theory**

As noted above, while identity multiplicity is acknowledged within social psychology there is rather limited research on multiple identities, with the focus instead generally being on one identity at any given time and treating identities as discrete categories (Dunham & Olson, 2016). Thus, studying them in this way overlooks the fundamentals of their lived reality and complexity, and in particular, misses how identities collectively shape the ways in which we experience ourselves and others in context (as is seen in the empirical papers: Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018; Chapter Five; Amer, 2020; Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). In examining multiple group identification in conjunction with one another and how these intersect and interact, this thesis has therefore contributed to a growing body of literature on dual or multiple identities (e.g. Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafy, 2011; Blackwood et al., 2015; Héliot et al., 2019; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Jones & Hynie, 2017; Verkuyten, 2006; Verkuyten, Wiley, Deaux, & Fleischmann, 2019). It has also specifically

contributed to literature and theoretical understandings of oppositional or seemingly incompatible identities.

The thesis proposes broadening the use of the Social Identity Approach (SIA; Haslam, 2004; Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010) as a theoretical framework that explicitly acknowledges identities as intersectional, interactional and of course, contextual. Not doing so misses a crucial part of how our identities are constructed, understood and experienced, particularly in relation to understandings of 'fit' and complementarity, or the absence of such. The particular emphasis on contextual understandings and representations of identities is by no means a new claim to social psychologists researching social identities. Yet, all too often context has not been explicit within such examinations and therefore needs to be highlighted and *re-emphasised* as important (Reicher, 2004).

In noting this, it becomes imperative to consider the role that others play within it, bringing us to the thesis' main theoretical contribution. The thesis illustrates the central role that others play in processes, experiences and consequences of identification through the concept of identity recognition (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020; Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). In doing so, it places the role of others, particularly relevant others, at the core of these identity dynamics. Indeed, as seen in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis, our identities are not merely constructions of who we are independent of our social contexts and others within them, but rather are shaped and negotiated through others and in interactions with others (Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2010). In this way this thesis contributes to further developing a small but growing body of literature on recognition and identity within social psychology (e.g. Blackwood et al., 2013, 2015; Hopkins, 2011; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Sanchez-Mazas, 2018; Verkuyten, 2006).

Through the empirical papers of this thesis, it suggests that as a construct, identity recognition enables us to connect different streams of research that conceptually overlap with it but are nestled within different bodies of literature (e.g. identity threat, Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; identity ascription, Pehrson & Green, 2010; Reddy & Gleibs, 2019; identity denial, Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009; Wang, Minervino, & Cheryan, 2013). It also demonstrates how the concept of recognition demands that identities are acknowledged as intersectional, interactional and embedded in contextual understandings of identity boundaries. What is more however, it shifts the approach from which identities are understood from the individual self to the self-other dynamics that exist within the in-between spaces of our interactions with others. Social psychological approaches and empirical research have all too often examined identification processes as declarations and considerations of the individual, which, although important, neglect the central role that others play in affirming and confirming such self-definitions and the subsequent consequences this has. In this way, the thesis puts forward some important considerations for the Social Identity Approach which is used as the theoretical backbone of the research presented. The findings of the thesis demonstrate how Social Identity Approach, particularly in relation to Self-Categorisation Theory, needs to reflect upon and expand its theoretical parameters to incorporate the role of others in processes of self-categorisation. Indeed, by focusing primarily the individual's own identity commitments and expressions of group membership over the interactional and relational processes between Self and Other, we overlook a fundamental ingredient that shapes our identity formation, negotiation and management within context. As such, the role of the other in identification processes becomes a topic of principal importance for further exploration within the field of social psychology precisely because it has not yet been fully, and explicitly resolved. Moreover, such considerations become all the

more complex when acknowledging the interacting, intersecting and multi-dimensional nature of identities that shift and change across contexts with different relevant others.

This thesis has gone some way into making inroads into these theoretical concerns drawing on the concept of recognition as a useful concept through which to understand and acknowledge the role of others in processes of identification, the interactions between shared systems of knowledge and understanding of 'fit' in relation to identities and the individual acts of agency that consider the positioning of the self by others.

Indeed, in attempting to understand the mechanisms that influence recognition, the thesis illustrated the role that markers and signifiers play (Chapter Five; Amer, 2020; Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation) and brings to the fore how recognition is connected with identity performance (Klein et al., 2007, see Chapter Five; Amer, 2020). Furthermore, it notes that the way in which identities are managed and negotiated is not only *influenced* by experiences of recognition, but that it in fact also *shapes* these experiences. The thesis highlights the active processes undertaken in which particular identities are purposefully concealed, made visible or asserted in their multiplicity by individuals in agentic attempts to control their experiences of identity (mis/non)recognition. Such strategies are considerate, reflective and evaluative of the consequences they have on one's identities and experiences of belonging. As such, it brings to light the ways in which identities are not only symbolically constructed but embedded in behaviour and practice, and demonstrates how they used to communicate one's position in relation *to* others and at times manipulate possibilities for acceptance *by* others.

The thesis also notes however, that agentic enactment and performance of identity does not guarantee recognition (Balaton-Chrimes & Stead, 2017; Coulthard, 2014); particularly when the multiplicity of belonging to complex, seemingly incompatible identities is asserted. In exploring this, the thesis begins to go some way in

explaining and understanding reactions of relevant others to the assertion of identity multiplicity and the connections this has with identity recognition and experiences of belonging. In doing so, it highlights the significance of understanding *who* the relevant others are, especially in relation to the power and status of their group membership (e.g. a part of a dominant majority ingroup or a marginalised minority ingroup).

The thesis shows how the multiple identities of individuals can trigger feelings of intergroup distinctiveness threat among relevant others who are members of the majority ingroup, particularly when an individual's membership to an outgroup is not clear (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). In trying to understand this phenomenon, the thesis draws on the importance of intergroup distinctiveness for positive identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and adds to research on intergroup distinctiveness threat and judgement (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). As such, it shows how identity multiplicity can cause the meaning of identity categories and their boundaries to blur, in turn threatening distinctiveness and resulting in negative evaluations of the individuals (Jetten, Summerville, Hornsey, & Mewse, 2005; Warner, Hornsey, & Jetten, 2007).

Although this thesis demonstrates that distinctiveness threat is triggered among dominant majority ingroup members in some instances where multiple identities are expressed/revealed, in the case of minority ingroup members, the findings of this thesis suggest that other dynamics may be at play (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation). While previous research notes the importance of distinctiveness for minorities (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003; Warner et al., 2007), this thesis posits that reactions by minority ingroup members to identity multiplicity appears to be influenced by whether or not a clear display of one's assimilation and allegiances to the minority group is enacted. Indeed, as the thesis highlights (Chapter Six; Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation), where this commitment is actively and visibly displayed (beyond verbal

articulation), membership to both majority and minority group membership is recognised. In Chapter Six of this thesis (Amer, Halabi, & Gleibs, in preparation) it is suggested that perhaps the absence of explicit commitment to the minority group (in this case through clear performative markers), which allows individuals to ‘pass’ as non-members, can lead the minority ingroup to ‘punish’ the individual by not recognising their multiple identity membership. Thus, in looking forward to the possible future direction this research could take, one element that stands out is the consideration of how minority identity commitment plays a role in these dynamics. For indeed, while the thesis makes inroads into understandings of identity processes, the central role recognition plays in this and the mechanisms that influence recognition (or lack thereof), more research needs to be conducted. In particular, further examination of the dynamics at play among minority ingroups, would need to be conducted to establish a more complete picture of how *who* the other is shapes the (mis/non)recognition of multiple and complex identities.

### **7.3.2 Empirical contribution**

While there is a fair amount of research on how Muslims more generally are depicted (e.g. Brice, 2011; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Moore, Mason, & Lewis, 2008; Poole, 2011, 2002) and indeed how British Muslims experience their identities (e.g. Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2015; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Sartawi & Sammut, 2012), no research that specifically considered the differences in experiences of Muslims of various ethnicities was found within social psychological literature. Future work on Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds is thus necessary in order to appreciate both the similarities and divergences of their experiences particularly in relation to the varying power dynamics embedded within different ethnic groups and its connections to (mis/non)recognition (e.g. Black British Muslims being members of two

groups that are highly stigmatised in society generally and are also seen as the ‘least desirable’ Muslims (Suleiman, 2016). Nevertheless, in focusing on white British Muslims specifically, and in collectively considering their ethnic, national and religious identities in how these shape experiences of identification, this thesis makes a novel contribution. Moreover, it not only considers how far findings about British Muslims in general can be applied to the representations and experiences of this group, but also notes the specificity and nuances of their experiences as members of both a marginalised minority group and a dominant majority. In this way, this empirical focus has enabled for the consideration of the interaction and intersection of multiple identity groups with difference statuses and power, and how groups at this crossroad come to be understood in relation to boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

### **7.3.3 Methodological considerations**

In addition to the main theoretical and empirical contributions, the thesis also provides some useful methodological considerations. It demonstrates how Critical Discourse Analysis can be a helpful methodological (and theoretical) tool for understanding the construction, dissemination and contestation of social representations through discursive means and how this is done so within the context of power asymmetries (Chapter Four; Amer & Howarth, 2018). In this way, it echoes van Dijk's (2006) emphasis on the importance of examining discourse in order to understand how social knowledge comes to be produced, reproduced and challenged. In addition, in using a mixed methods design, the thesis shows how different methodological approaches can inform each other with the qualitative methods providing the exploratory basis for specific quantitative investigations. It establishes the social and political context in which white British Muslims experience their identities and explores the different ways that they perceive their identities to be recognised and their strategic performative responses to

this. In doing so, the thesis was able to examine how salient markers and signifiers influence identity recognition, how perceptions of threat and group compatibility also plays a role, and in turn, the consequences this can have on the acceptance or rejection of individuals from groups they consider themselves to be a part of.

## 7.4 Conclusion

The thesis began with the research question;

*How do people with multiple, and at times, seemingly contradicting and incompatible identities experience their identities across various contexts with different relevant others? And what are the consequences in relation to recognition and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion?*

In working through this question with a focus on white British Muslims, the thesis highlights the Social Identity Approach as key to an integrative theoretical framework through which to examine processes and experiences of identity multiplicity. In also drawing on the Social Representations Theory it grounds the understanding of multiple identities within their social and political contexts, particularly in relation to perceptions of their compatibility or incompatibility. The thesis demonstrates the central role of others in how we experience our multiple identities in context. Regardless of our own personal constructions of who we are and whether we see our multiple identities as intertwined, interconnected and compatible, it is how we are seen by others, or indeed how we are not seen, that often takes precedence. Stereotypes associated with identities, their over-visibility and/or perceptions of identity incompatibility can result in experiencing identity mis/nonrecognition even when cues of other identities held are available. As such, socially constructed knowledge in relation to group boundaries, the

meaning of identity categories and their 'fit' with one another become projected, constraining and confining the lens through which individuals and groups are perceived. As a result, identities are denied, stripped from individuals, leaving often very real and damaging consequences on their sense of self.

This however does not discount the possibility of enacting one's agency. As this thesis has demonstrated, experiences of mis/nonrecognition can lead to strategies of identity performance being undertaken where conscious decisions are made in the expression, suppression and assertion of identities in order to regain a sense of control over how they are recognised. However, even here, the role others play needs to be considered. For *who* the relevant other is in specific contexts can determine the performative strategies employed and indeed whether identities will become recognised as we wish them to be. Thus, the self is in constant interaction with the other, exhibiting the dialogical nature of identities and how they are negotiated within social and political contexts. Accordingly, the thesis emphasises how the concept of identity recognition becomes crucial for understanding processes and experiences of identification, identity multiplicity and of sameness and difference. In proposing an explicit incorporation of recognition into the theorisation of identities, it ensures that this central dimension is not overlooked; a concept that at its core emphasises identities as embedded within self-other dynamics and acknowledges how experiences of identification can have real consequences on feelings of inclusion and exclusion. In doing so, the thesis highlights the relevance of recognition for understanding real world issues related to marginalisation, alienation, discrimination and experiences of inequality, and how the boundaries of identities come to be produced, re-produced, challenged and contested, in turn broadening and narrowing conceptualisations and parameters of belonging.

I started this thesis with a short account of my mother's experience of the denial of her identity during her time as a supply teacher in London – some seven years ago. A lot has changed in the world since then, and not necessarily for the better as representations of both Britishness and whiteness have narrowed in ways to further exclude Muslims and many other identities. However, within Social Psychology, our understanding of multiple, seemingly contradictory identities and the politics of recognition have widened considerably. I hope this thesis and the research on which it is based represents a step towards developing more nuanced and more constructive concepts of the very complex nature and politics of identities today.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1: Coding frame for Study 1

### Discursive theme 1: Threat/Not a threat

Basic theme	Code	Description	Example of quote
Threat to security	Hard to detect/slip through the net	Draws on racialised representations of Muslims and surveillance practices based on stereotypes, therefore white Muslims as being able to go by unnoticed	<i>“One aim is to create an army of "white-skinned" militants, men born in Europe and America who can convert to Islam and become harder for the authorities to detect as they cross the world on their missions, including suicide attacks”</i>
	Muslim identity	Emphasis on or description of Muslim identity of white subject (actor description)	<i>“a white convert to Islam”</i>
	Conversion rates and threat	Emphasis on link between the rise in conversion and the increased threat of terrorism (generalisation)	<i>“In 2001, there were an estimated 60 000 Muslim converts in Britain. Since then, the country has seen the spread of violent Islamist extremism and terror plots, including the July 7 bombings. Converts who have turned to terror include Nicky Reilly, who tried to blow up a restaurant in Bristol with a nail bomb, shoe bomber Richard Reid and July 7 bomber Germaine Lindsey.”</i>
Threat to society and culture	Numbers and stats	Emphasis on numbers of Muslims increasing (numbers game)	<i>“Estimates of the numbers of "new British Muslims" range from 10,000 to 20,000. The vast majority appear to be women, as in the United States where the ratio of male to female converts is one to four.”</i>

	Dilution of Britishness	Emphasis on British cultural landscape changing as a result of 'spread' of Islam	<i>"Islamification of Britain: record numbers embrace Muslim faith"</i>
Threat not assumed	Considering the evidence	Weighing up of evidence and considering expert knowledge and analysis (authority and evidentiality)	<i>"Don't jump to conclusions over Briton, say experts. Role in mall 'overblown' to cover Kenyan mistakes"</i>
	Threat vs gender	Weighing up level of threat by drawing on gendered stereotypes/representations of females as innocent and nurturing	<i>"When a number of witnesses described a white woman among the terrorists, was it Samantha Lewthwaite they had seen, the youngest daughter of a British soldier from Aylesbury, the shy, gawky schoolgirl who "all the teachers loved"?"</i>
Not a threat	White Muslims vs non-white Muslims	Emphasis of white Muslims as critical of non-white Muslims and their behaviours and opinions (comparison)	<i>"Eaton decried the despots and human rights abuses in the Muslim world, and, closer to home, held a hard line on Muslim immigrants: "It is time for the Muslims in Britain to settle down, to find their own way, to form a real community and to discover a specifically British way of living Islam," he noted. "The constant arrival of uneducated, non-English-speaking immigrants from the subcontinent makes that more difficult. This is no curry island."</i>
	Islam ≠ Terrorism	Disrupts connection between Islam and terrorism	<i>"a 'very small minority' among an otherwise law abiding majority"</i>
	Victims of radicalisation	Notions of vulnerability and being victims of radicalisation, preyed upon by terror groups	<i>"I only spoke to him after he converted to Islam, but he seemed to be very quiet and vulnerable," said Ahmed. "We have a saying in Kurdish: 'you can't clap with one hand', which fits here. ""</i>

## Discursive theme 2: Rationality

Basic theme	Code	Description	Example of quote
Conversion as irrational: Questioning rationality	Contradiction of level of education and conversion	Emphasis on level of education (and class) and contradicting with acts of conversion	<i>“These are not children of the chattering classes or teenage mums with Muslim boyfriends. They are ordinary, educated, thoroughly British - and white - women who have chosen Islam through conviction.”</i>
	Islam vs. West	Emphasis on western liberalisation and freedoms in comparison with Islamic rules (comparison)	<i>“Yet female converts, typically well educated, merely pontificate on the failure of Western feminism, chuck away their make-up and micro-skirts, gather up their babies and university degrees and march resolutely to the mosque”</i>
	Mockery and contradictions	Mockery used to emphasise believed contradictions in conversion and compatibility.	<i>“Women's Libbers in headscarves”</i>
Dismissal of conversion	Rebellion	Conversion depicted as act of rebellion and therefore not taken seriously	<i>“God is the new drug of choice for today's young rebels”</i>
	Naivety	Conversion discussed as an act of naivety and therefore not taken seriously	<i>“It was, undoubtedly, a peculiar - some would say foolhardy - thing for a white, middle-aged British divorcee to be doing. And, with crushing predictability, it went horribly wrong.”</i>
Conversion as rational choice	Agency: In their own words	Use of direct quotes explain and justifying conversion and positive experiences (voice)	<i>“she practised the religion for 18 months before converting. "I wanted my family to be involved, to know it was serious and not a phase. So many people said, 'Convert now', but to me it was more important that my family and friends accepted the idea. I have met so many people who have done it behind their parents' back.”</i>

			<i>She converted in July 2005, the week after the London bombings. Her parents, brother and grandmother were there. Debi describes it as "the best, biggest and most important decision I've made. Islam has given me everything I wanted. I am happier now. ""</i>
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### Discursive theme 3: Identity compatibility/incompatibility

Basic theme	Code	Description	Example of quote
Conflict and contradictions	In between-ness	Emphasises the oppositional pull of Britishness and Islam (comparison)	<i>"British converts caught between two cultures."</i>
	Questioning loyalty and patriotism	Drawing on subject's connections with armed forces or police as symbols of patriotism that contradict with conversion (actor description)	<i>"Born to English soldier Andy Lewthwaite - who met and married Irish Catholic Christine Allen while serving in Northern Ireland during the 1970s - she enjoyed an unremarkable childhood on Banbridge's Whyte Acres estate."</i>
	Changes in behaviour and lifestyle	Descriptions of previous lifestyle vs new lifestyle (comparison)	<i>"He left behind his life as a trombone and tuba player in a Territorial Army band"</i>
British and Muslim as compatible	Identities in harmony	Emphasises religion and national identity as compatible with one another	<i>"But the organisation's report [Faith Matters] argued that most converts saw their religion as 'perfectly compatible' with living in Britain. It said: 'Converts do not represent a devious fifth column determined to undermine the Western way of life this is a group of normal people united in their adherence to a religion which they, for the most part, see as perfectly compatible with Western life.'</i>

## Appendix 2: Participant demographics from Study 2

Male participants N = 15

Female participants N = 11

Age range: 24 – 78 (M = 45)

Participant	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	City
1	Aidan	M	34	London
2	Aisha	F	39	London
3	Andrew	M	35	Birmingham
4	Ben	M	30	London
5	Colin (Omar)	M	54	Birmingham
6	Donna	F	24	Cardiff
7	Fatima	F	78	London
8	Frank	M	32	London
9	Hassan	M	56	Dover
10	Jacob	M	58	Exeter
11	James (Musa)	M	39	London
12	Jane	F	73	Luton
13	Jessica	F	25	Leeds
14	Maria	F	67	London
15	Mark	M	32	London
16	Martin	M	33	Milton Keynes
17	Mathew (Yahya)	M	37	Wolverhampton
18	Mustafa	M	49	Gloucester
19	Nabeel	M	33	London
20	Natasha	F	47	Luton
21	Samantha	F	45	Cardiff
22	Sara	F	28	London
23	Thomas	M	33	London
24	Timothy	M	69	Colchester
25	Zahra	F	38	London
26	Zainab	F	36	London

## **Appendix 3: Participant information and consent form for Study 2**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity negotiation and choices around practice and visibility of identity among white Muslims in Britain. It will also explore the issues which influence and effect identity negotiation.

This research is conducted as part of a PhD in Psychology under the supervision of Dr Caroline Howarth at the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, London School of Economics.

### **Procedure:**

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be required to respond to a series of questions about your identity. The interview will be conducted by the researcher and will be audio recorded.

### **Ethical guidelines:**

Please be aware that:

- Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point during or after the completion of the interview.
- If you decide to withdraw, your data will not be used at any point and will be disposed of appropriately to preserve your privacy and anonymity.
- You have the right to refuse to respond to any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.
- You can stop the interview at any point and ask the researcher any questions you may have.
- Your name will never be used when handling the interview or during transcription, analysis and write up of the study.

### **Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have with regards to this study or your participation. If you have any questions after the completion of the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me, Amena Amer, at [a.amer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:a.amer@lse.ac.uk) or 07415202848. Participants who wish to see the transcript of their interview or wish to track the progress of the research will be kept fully informed.

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**Consent:** I confirm that I have read and understood the purpose of the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. These questions have been answered to my satisfaction and as a result I agree to take part.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point during or after the completion of the interview. I also agree for the interview to be audio recorded.

Name of participant (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix 4: Topic guide for Study 2

Background:

1. Tell me about your upbringing.
  - Was religion an important or integral part of your life growing up?
  - Through whom? Parents? Personal interest? Friends?
  - Why was it important?
2. Tell me about your relationship to Islam/conversion.
  - When did you first hear about Islam? What were your thoughts/opinions?
  - When did you start reading/getting interested in Islam?
  - What was the process like for you?
  - How did others react/respond?
  - Did you tell people you were thinking of converting or after you had converted? What governed that decision? (Converts only)

Identity - self:

3. In terms of identity, how do you see yourself?
  - What is important to who you are and how you see yourself?
  - Expand/Explain
  - Has the way in which you identify yourself changed over time in any way? Why? How? When? Conversion?
  - Would you say any particular parts of your identity to be more important than others? Which parts? Why?
4. Would you say different parts of your identity become more prominent in different situations? How? Can you give examples of this?

Identity – others:

5. In terms of identity, how do you think other people (Muslims/non-Muslims/of faith/no faith/general) see you?
  - Why do you think that is the case?
  - Can you give examples?
  - How does that make you feel?
6. Do people realise (converts only)/ assume (non-Converts only) you are a convert? (non-converts only).
  - Why do you think that is the case?
  - How does that make you feel?
7. What do you think most people (Muslims/non-Muslims/of faith/no faith/general) think when they hear the word 'Muslim'?
  - What kind of person do they imagine?
  - What is your opinion are the contributing factors to this?

- Do you feel you are the type of image that comes to mind? Why/why not?
- How does that make you feel?

8. Do you think it is clear to people that you are Muslim? How do they react when they find out? Do you have examples you can share?

Practice and visibility:

- 9. How/Do you display your Muslim identity through visual means? Is this something that is important to you? Why/why not?
  - Hijab/beard/dress etc.
- 10. Name change – when? Why? Would you? Why/why not?
  - What impact (if any) do you think this has on the way in which people treat/perceive you?
- 11. Do you go to the mosque/feel a part of a Muslim community etc?

Interaction:

- 12. Do you know many Muslims/non-Muslims?
- 13. Do you discuss issues of identity and the sometimes negative portrayal of Muslims?
- 14. Have you had any negative experiences? How does that make you feel?

Final questions/wrap up:

- 15. Are there things I have not asked that you think I should?
- 16. Is there anything you would like to add?

**End**

## Appendix 5: Example of interview transcript from Study 2

Note on anonymity: This interview transcript has been anonymised, all identifiable markers, including names of people and places have been replaced or omitted.

R = Researcher

I = interviewee

Duration: 01:33:39

Location of interview: London

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**START**

**R: Tell me a bit about yourself and like your background? What role religion has had in your upbringing and in your life so far?**

I: So, I'm from Wales, South Wales. I'm from Cardiff, erm, both my parents are Welsh, and I guess most of my family is from Wales or England, I don't know how far back but yea. My parents, my dad would identify as a Christian although not practicing, erm, yea, he's aware of that, and then my mother who started identify as a Christian, she was a Jehovah's Witness in her 20s (laughs) but now she would identify as either Agnostic or Atheist. Er, one or the other, I'd say Agnostic, I-I don't think she completely believes in nothing. Erm, they sent me to, not Sunday School (laughs), Tuesday School (laughter) like after school kind of club erm, when I was a child. I can't remember how many years, but that was in a church, um, so we went through like Biblical stories, general things you do in Sunday School. Erm, but I can't remember if I believed in it at the time. But um, yea as a teenager I would have identified as Agnostic as well. Sometimes Atheist, sometimes Agnostic, I wasn't quite sure, erm, and I think that confusion, coupled with the attention that Islam was given in the media, I don't even- you know, when I was a teenager erm, probably drove me towards, you know, doing some soul-searching and erm, looking at different religions. [.] Erm, yea. I guess I was looking at Islam not just because of the soul-searching aspect, but because of the negative attention as well. So that, I guess, drove me to look at that more than other religions. It was kind of like, oh do I wanna figure out, do I wanna believe in God? Also why are people saying these bad things about Muslims? You know, what does it really say? Yea [sighs]. I guess people in school, there were no Muslims in my school erm, it was 99.9% white. I think there was guy who was half Iranian half white. Erm, and he wasn't Muslim. So, yea, that was my school. And people used to say things like ah Islam, Muslims, foreigners, blah blah blah so, erm, that kind of made me wanna find things out so I could defend people who weren't present kind of thing. I didn't want people to just talk

badly about you know, people. But I didn't know anything about Islam, so I had to go and have a little look myself [sighs]. And yea. I erm, got a bit hooked, and I just wanted to learn more and more until eventually I kind of came to the conclusion that I did believe in God and I co-continued looking at Islam, *da'wa* [proselytising] videos, that kind of thing until I was like okay, I think I wanna be Muslim [...] you know I think I believe in this and erm, yea. Took me a while to kind of make that choice because initially I thought that if I became Muslim today, tomorrow I have to wear *hijab* [headscarf], I have to eat *halal* food, I have to do this that and the other, but [...] put me off, especially because I was living at home with my parents so this was probably around the time I was 18. Erm, and I was still going to Sixth Form. Didn't want to go to school, rock up in a *hijab* that would have been awful [laughs] so yea I delayed it, went to university, [...] I joined the Islamic Society, I was too afraid to go on my own [laughs] I don't know what I was thinking, they, one of my friends also wanted to join who wasn't Muslim, and attend their events, so we both did, and eventually I was like okay, I have the confidence to do it now- and also people told me you don't have to do everything straight away, take your time and yea, do it bit by bit. So, yea, at 19, I converted, yea.

**R: And what's that journey been like so far?**

I: Umm, [...] hm, so [...] I converted in the summer holidays, so I was at home with my parents erm and it was Ramadan, so I was secretly fasting. Erm, because I wasn't ready to tell them, [...] erm, and eventually fasting at home became difficult so I was like okay I'm going to tell my dad because he's the more chilled one. Ans my dad was initially fine with it because there were no outward symbols of me being Muslim. So, he had interesting questions like oh are you gonna disown me? Will you hate me now because I eat pork and drink alcohol? Um, do you worship the moon? [laughs] a few things like that [laughter]. He was quite accepting, erm, and just kind of got on with it. I didn't tell my mother, I kept hiding the fasting from her, erm [inaudible]. And then when I went back to uni in September, erm [...] I [...] decided to start wearing a headscarf, and [...] next time my parents came to visit I told my mother, my father already knew- actually I had sent my dad a text with a picture of me, I was like someone take a photo of me and I said father, I'm dressing like this now and he was like okay, just be safe, that kind of thing. And erm, [...] yea, so then my mum and dad came to visit, and my mum, she was devastated [laughs]. She erm just sort of bombarded me with questions slash attacks based on the religion, mainly oh the religion says this, says this, erm [...] mainly about women, violence, stuff like that, terrorism [...] yea. That was [...] the initial [...] you know, coming out to my family [laughs]. Anything else?

**R: Has your mum's perception of things change?**

I: Yea, okay, so in terms of parents. My dad, like I said, he's really chilled, he might have his opinions but he keeps them to himself and erm, I'm my dad's only child, so he conducts, I mean all parents love their children, but he you know- and my mum has five

children because she divorced so I dunno my dad just wants to look out for my best interests, he doesn't say anything, you know, he'd occasionally ask questions, but it's my mum who's the vocal one. Erm, and over the years, after many more questions and attacks she's come to understand more, erm, [...] I think she's come to, I don't really know how to say it, understand Islam more, uh, but- I guess just realise that some of the things that are out there, some of the information that's out there kind of, completely untrue. She still doesn't love Islam but she's more balanced about it. Um, and yea [...] I feel like my mother was kind of [...] mm, I don't know how to describe it [...] she was a bit [...] not left-wing, not right-wing, in the middle. Sometimes she'd say really really left-wing things, and sometimes she just says things that were you know, headline of the Daily Mail. But over the years, after just discussing with her, after just I dunno have quite a close relationship with her, she's become kind of more accepting and she's very now, I would describe my mum as sort of left-wing. [...] yea. I don't know if you want to know anything more about them before I move on to broader family and-

**R: No no, feel free to talk-**

I: Okay, so I have, as I mentioned my mum has five children, so I have four siblings. And yea, they're, they're cool, they're fine. Yea my sisters, the oldest, erm, my, one sister's 20 years older than me and the other is 18 years older than me and they just, yea they're fine. Never said anything, or they might have said things to my mother but I didn't know about it [laughs], they just accepted it, I think they're just a bit more [...] a bit, younger generation, a bit more relaxed, they have their own families, their own lives and kids to think about. So, they're not really bothered. They both live in cities, you know, they're not village people. [laughs]. One lives in Swansea, one lives in Cardiff, so they're used to diversity erm [...] but yea. Nothing really from them. Sometimes my sister, she'll get into arguments with people and she'll ring me, quick help me out, what can I say. These people are talking about Muslims, you know, what can I say to them? They're doing my head. She doesn't even understand what they're saying, she can't defend Muslims herself, but she knows she wants to defend them, she doesn't know if what they're saying is true or not, but she just has the- she just has this [...] and she will you know defend other communities as well, even if she doesn't know what they're saying is true or not, but just has this desire to defend people I guess. Um, and then [...] my brothers,

[TEXT REMOVED FOR ANONYMITY]

and then my other brother, he's in his own world, he doesn't mind, he probably identifies as Christian so, he doesn't have any opinion on it. He has his own things to do. Er, yea, he, he never vocalises things about foreigners, you know people of difference races, Muslims, just, yea, not bothered [laughs]. Just very erm [...] I guess it doesn't affect him so he doesn't think about it, er he's not hostile either [...] I dunno how to, the word, yea, so yea, the relationship with my siblings depend on what they're like and most of them are fine [...] erm, yea.

[TEXT REMOVED FOR ANONYMITY ]

**R: So, what about school friends? You said you converted when you were-**

I: 19

**R: but you were looking into it when you were 18, and you were still in school-**

I: I actually had a few friends that, that I told them of my interest but they erm, they never knew that I would convert. I think I told one person that I was interested, a nice open-minded kind of person but I feel like, in secondary school, there are not- it's quite small, we might have like 1000 people or whatever depending on where you are, and you can't always necessarily always choose the people you want to be with, or choose the people you have lots of common interests with, so I feel like since university we have drifted apart. We drifted apart generally, I've bumped into a few of them and it's like ah hey how are you but I really don't know what their opinions are of me being a Muslim because oh I don't want to ask to be honest [sighs] I don't wanna know, I have to deal with you know, family, people on the streets so I don't wanna have that conversation. if they have opinions, they keep it to themselves I don't wanna know [laughs].

**R: And no one's ever, when you bump into them in the street, they recognise you and everything, but they just don't mention-**

I: Well, they you know, Facebook and all that-

**R: Oh of course-**

I: So, they know who I am [laughs]. Yea, I remember [...] well this is quite recent, recently erm, someone I didn't know, I didn't really associate with at school, but she saw my Facebook, messaged me, asking me about it because she was interested. She kinda just wanted to let me know she was interested. And she wanted to ask if she had any questions could she ask me and would I be okay with that, and she did ask me a few things. I'm going to such and such, what should I wear. General things, nothing really deep, erm ranging from, I mean obviously you don't know because you don't know if that individual is going to look at you differently if you wear the scarf or not because you're only presenting yourself in one way but it would range from obviously just stares and mean looks and like evils. I-I- I do know, when I'm on my own I notice it, when I'm with someone I mention it to them and they notice, and when I'm with my mum, my mum gets very angry, she's like, oh is she wearing something of yours? [laughs] she just gets really angry, a few of my family members especially my mother and my sister.

**R: How do people respond to that? When she says things like that?**

I: They don't respond. Yea yea. I remember this one thing. It was my mother's birthday, and we went to like this pub that was serving Sunday dinner and we booked a huge table for family, because it was like a special one, it was like her 60th, and erm, we walked in, my sister, my niece and myself- my niece that I mentioned earlier, the mixed-raced, half Jamaican, the three of us walked in and I think my sister noticed people's gaze turn towards the door, and she said, literally, really loudly, oh you can tell we're in The Valleys now can't you [laughs] you've never seen a Black person or a Muslim before [laughter] my sister's really feisty so no one, no one responds but [laughter] she's hilarious.

**R: So, have you had any more explicit negative experiences, you mentioned these nasty looks but that you can never really say if it's because someone's just having a bad day or- Have you had anything more explicit?**

I: Yea, yea [laughs] yea yea yea. Like under-the-breath comments, things like that. You know, words like terrorist or whatever. people shouting out of cars seems to be, yep, that was before, F Allah, erm [...] and then [...] twice when I was collecting money for charity, you know bucketing, one person, this was in Cardiff, came up to me and just said, go back to your own f-ing country, and then, I was fasting as well, and usually I'm not very good at responding to people but I was just, I'm from Wales! [laughs] and she then came back, and she was eating a sandwich and put napkin and whatever, wrap into my bucket, so yea, that was one time, and another time, I was bucketing again in Exeter and, this was, this was probably interesting for you, erm, there was a couple of us, Nigerian sister, Pakistani sister and myself, and a guy, just came out of Greggs, walked up to us, and he had a few pennies, put it in the bucket and I was like ah thanks, whatever, and I must have spoken to him or spoken to someone else, he noticed my accent, maybe it was a bit more pronounced then, I don't know if I'm very Welsh erm, and he was like oh where are you from? and I was like from Wales, and he was like oh so why, why are you dressed like that? And the Nigerian girl I was with, she's very, er, feisty and she got in there straight away and she was like oh yea you know anyone can be a Muslim, you don't have to be from a certain place, erm, you know, it's just a religion, you know, Welsh people, English, whatever, and he was like, you well if you like Islam so much why don't you go to Iran, I'll buy you a ticket to wherever, [laughs] and then he was like yea you can get stoned for adultery [...] yea a bit random, [laughs] and then he just walked off. He'd had his say on his thoughts and he just walked off.

**R: How does that make you feel when people say things like that?**

I: [...] mm, annoyed. Mmm, it bugs me the ignorance, the kind of lack of responsibility that so many different parties that are to blame for it, or partially to blame for it. The lack of responsibility they are taking. And the lack of action to sort of do anything about it [...] I put a lot of blame on the media for it, erm, I know that people have their own minds, but a lot of people are quite ignorant, a lot of people just take information and just er kind of, the headline the one day, the next day that's their opinion, and I've

actually heard people saying things that literally are the headline of- of a newspaper and yea, it's quite sad. And just like legislation and stuff, and I kind of, uh, it's just such a mess. [laughs] yea, makes me feel, sometimes makes me feel a bit hopeless, [.] yea.

**R: hmm, so how would you- if someone was to ask you how you identified yourself what would you say?**

I: I would just say [.] like I'm Welsh, because I was born there, and I grew up there. And it's kind of more easy to kind of understand, you know when you go abroad you see oh okay, I am different, even if you go to France you're like okay I am Welsh, I'm definitely Welsh because this, this and this. I dunno I feel like we put too much emphasis on nationality to identify yourself because we have so many, multiple identities, and nationality is just one part- it might be a large part - but it kind of varies from person to person. Like someone might feel that their nationality defines them slightly and someone else might feel that it's almost their entire identity. I would say it's a part of me, but I don't know how much. It's like, I don't know, I'm not a psychologist [laughter] you're 25% identified by your Welsh-ness [laughter].

**R: So, what other things are important to you in terms of who you are?**

I: So, erm, Welsh-ness, um, I would that when I go abroad I would identify myself as British, but generally I am anti the whole British thing, you know we are different countries, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, so I don't see myself as British really, more Welsh, although I am quite ashamed about it considering Brexit and all [laughs] yea. It seems that ethnic minorities in Wales and Scotland seem to be more comfortable defining themselves as Welsh or Scottish. I think it was a survey I read but people see that English is kind of white and that's why they call themselves British.

**R: Yea. It's also to do with far-right groups and how they've taken the flag and things like that. And issues around the empire, and England being the seat of government, all of that sort of stuff.**

I: Yea, and British, and really when you think of what is British it really does sort of reflect England more than other parts of the UK. So anyway. And obviously Muslim takes a large part of my identity as well because it affects what I do on a daily basis and effects what I look like to my- you know to myself and to other people. Erm [...] yea my nationality and my religion, what else? Yea, er, I'm a woman [laughs].

**R: Do you think, did you ever think about identity before converting and has that sort of changed once you chose to be Muslim?**

I: Er, I can't really tell you, probably because I grew up in Wales and I went to an all-Welsh school, all our studies were in Welsh, other than English obviously [laughs] so I

probably always have had sort of a- I've always identified as sort of er, Welsh and I think er that's influence from my parents as well, mainly my mother because my mum's really like pro-Wales and *Plaid Cymru*, all of that, influence from her, but er, I really don't know. I can't really transfer thoughts back 10 years to remember. Obviously I think about it a lot more now because again media, British values, this that and the other, so obviously I'm made to think about it, I wasn't made to think about it before as much erm, but now I am, because my loyalties are questioned.

**R: Is that based on- you say your loyalties are questioned now, because you're Muslim?**

I: Yep. I think all the Muslim communities' loyalties are questions by the government and the media.

**R: I was wondering, going back to people's reactions to you and when they find out you're Welsh, how do you respond to that?**

I: Um, yea, I feel, when any- any group is like under scrutiny they're gonna feel that they have to prove themselves so with Muslims now, with myself, if you're being scrutinised and you're being criticised, you're going to think oh I need to prove myself now, I need to prove I can speak English, I need to prove that I'm not oppressed, you feel you need to prove many things, whatever is being said against you, it's not against you individually it's as a collective erm, if you form part of that, if identify as that, or even- you still feel you have a lot to prove. [.] Identity and nationality and other things.

**R: Yea. So, I remember you mentioned that you met a lot of people who said you can take things slowly in terms of wearing the *hijab* for example-**

I: Yea, you remember I said it put me off in becoming Muslim, well that as well put me off because hello world I'm Muslim [laughs] and then, so so, that was on my mind since the beginning really, from the time when I was considering it, to the time when I was actually thinking of doing it so I had been thinking about it for really long long time. Erm, I think a lot of emphasis is put on it, too much influence is put on it, because, patriarchy [laughs] and all that. And how women dress generally Muslim or not, and yea [.] I kinda made the decision from day one really and part of that was to do with identity really. I wanted erm, when when I was in street I wanted to be able to identify with them, I wanted to be able to say like *salaam* [Arabic greeting – shortened version of 'Peace be upon you'] and for them to say it me rather than me say it first because they wouldn't know I'm Muslim without the headscarf, so I think yea, part of that decision was to do with identity as well as religious reasons yea. Erm, to be identifiable to other Muslims. I have other friends as well who don't wear the headscarf who have had varying reactions when they say *salaam* such as people not replying or saying *wa alaikom* ['and on you' – shortened response usually to non-Muslims] without saying the *salaam* bit.

**R: Oh really-**

I: Yea. People have said it to my Muslim non-*hijabi* friends who are white, because I guess if you're Asian they assume, or from a different background they just say oh you don't wear a scarf, but if you're white they're looking at you oh what's going on here. Are they Muslim? Are they not? So, yea. And then some people obviously just say it back. Nice human beings [laughs].

**R: How about now? People respond absolutely fine?**

I: Yea, yea, fine and sometimes, too fine. Too positively. It reminds me of the Myriam François thing I was telling you about, talking about white Muslims, and Muslims converts from other backgrounds like Asian or Black, she's talked about how white Muslims get put on a pedestal and things like that.

**R: Have you experienced that yourself do you think?**

I: Yea [...] obviously, there's only one story I can think, because you can never know what someone's reaction is gonna be like to you compared to someone who's a convert and isn't white. I think you'd have to get a white convert in a room and an Asian and a Black convert in a room and ask how has your experience been and compare the two, but obviously you don't know people they've met different people and all of that. But I do remember when I was in a mosque and [...] this woman saw me and people always assume like "oh are you a convert" because they see the pale skin and all that and I was like "yes" and she was like "Oh *Mashallah* [Arabic expression – 'God has willed it'] *Mashallah*, amazing!" and I pointed to my friend, oh she's also a convert, she's Chinese and she was like "oh" and kind of ignored her a bit, so I feel like yea that might happen. I don't know, I'm white so I'm not sure, and I don't have many convert friends who are not white, so the majority of my convert friends are white, and I haven't really discussed with my non-white convert friends what experiences they've had.

**R: But have your white friends had similar experiences?**

I: Yea, yea. Yea. I think that- um I think some people just don't think about it that much you know some people just get on with stuff like and other people over analyse everything, I'm one of the people who over analyses everything and I have some friends who are the same [laughs] but I have had conversations with them and I was kind of saying like, part of the reasons why I converted to Islam was because everyone is seen as equal in terms of, er- racial basis, in terms of like the Prophet's last sermon, and we find that annoying and off-putting. Not Islam obviously because we know what Islam says but Muslims act quite differently, the people I've spoken with about it.

**R: And are you a part of like a Muslim community would you say?**

I: Yes. Erm, in Cardiff, obviously I have friends, I wouldn't call that a community, but there's an actual group, in [...] I think it's just Wales, [...] anyway we have a group, it's like a WhatsApp group and sometimes they do meet ups but it's basically for converts and we kind of get together, have a sense of community and support.

**R: And how is that? How do you find that?**

I: Yea yea, I've, you know I've made many friends from it, you know they obviously have similar experiences, similar issues and stuff, so yea definitely, it's a good thing.

**R: And do you feel a part of a sort of broader mosque kind of community?**

I: I also volunteer for one of my local mosques so yes is the answer to that question [laughs] and like I said, I interviewed for [Muslim organisation] in Cardiff, there's a working group, sort of in the country so I volunteer for that as well, so I kind of have a few different groups that I'm a part of, there's the convert one, there's diverse one, there's different things, sometimes I volunteer for different things, like [Muslim organisation], stuff like that. So, yea, there's a few different communities.

**R: Nice. So, you've been Muslim for a while now, do you feel like you're treated like a convert?**

I: I think it depends on the person. Some people are a bit more ignorant I suppose, it's a bit of a dense question. Like I don't really, I never had an issue with the word convert really until again Myriam Francois-Cerrah wrote something, how long are you gonna call me a convert for? And that got me thinking, like yea that's true, like some people have been converts longer than some young Muslims have been Muslim so and you're calling them convert, and like the Prophet wasn't a Muslim and then he was a Muslim so technically he's a convert and a lot of the *sehaba* [Companions of the Prophet] weren't Muslim, you don't say oh the great convert Omar bin Khattab [laughs] you just call them Muslim, so erm, like I- I understand why you'd identify someone as a convert because they are different to someone who is Muslim and like they have the family and support network hopefully some of the time, hopefully most of the time, there is a difference, but I think there is too much emphasis because eventually you catch up with all the stuff you've learned, at school and stuff. So like yea.

One thing, this is said to me a lot, ah *mashallah* you're a convert, you have really high *imaan* [faith] I think when you initially convert maybe, but when you've been a Muslim 10 years, 20, you become like a born-Muslim. You have the same issues, the same struggles, there are converts who don't like going back to the typical headscarf example again, I hate that, there are converts to don't wear a headscarf or they wear it and they take it off. It doesn't mean they're going to be perfect, or ignore the headscarf thing and talk about praying, just because you're a convert it doesn't mean you're going to be

praying for the rest of your life, some people stop, some people go back to what they were before and then come back again you know. Being a convert doesn't make you sort of like super Muslim [laughs] and I think like that's the perception of a lot of people.

**R: And you've been treated that way specifically by people?**

I: Yea, I've actually been told that. Oh, *mashallah* your *imaan* is really high. Or you know, oh wow you're much stronger than born Muslims.

**R: How do you respond to comments like that?**

I: I'm not the argumentative type so I just say oh thank you, I just say like oh no no we all have our struggles, that kind of thing. You know. Everyone's different. I usually kind of like say even people who are born Muslim are kind of like converts because they get to their teenage years and start questioning things and then they make that kind of decision. The conscious choice, to continue to practice or start practicing or up my game or or, and you see then say oh yea yea true true, but I don't go into like, usually it's like a comment, so I don't want to go into like a big discussion and talk about it for like five hours so I just say that and that's about it.

**R: Hmm. Going back, you were talking about wanting to be identified as Muslim, so you mentioned wearing the headscarf, what other things did you choose to do to show your Muslim identity?**

I: Hm, initially, I suppose in the beginning, things can go many ways as a convert depending on who you're hanging around with, what content you're looking at, you know, I was a bit more rigid initially with my practise I suppose, and unfortunately it always goes back to dress I supposed, because you know, women [laughs] erm, initially I was like okay, it was not about appearance what men thought and whether they looked at me and all that, it was an internal thing as well. I started wearing *abaya* [robe-like dress], and a big part of that was, one people were telling me it was compulsory, you know you have to wear one piece of material, as opposed to you know a top and trousers or a top and whatever, and another part of that was it was going to be a good way for me to detect myself from being materialistic. Erm, and [...] so I wore abaya for a long time, two or three years erm, and eventually I think, I I came to conclusion that it wasn't compulsory but I carried on wearing it regardless, erm, and I just, I guess I was just like I don't need to be wearing this anymore, I can still be covered, I didn't think it was compulsory, I don't need to wear it, I dunno I stopped wearing it. I can't really remember all the things I was thinking about why but, yea. I did stop wearing abaya. I thought to myself it's not like abaya or nothing you know I can I can. Sometimes when I go to the mosque I just wear an abaya because it's easier or in Ramadan actually because the last few years it's been in the summer so I just wanna wear that and shorts underneath so I'm not dying in *taraweeh* [Ramadan nightly prayers] [laughs] because you know the fans are never good enough. Erm, yea. So that's something I did, I wore

*abaya* as well. [...] erm [...] my [...] family didn't like it. Erm, they [...] even with just the scarf they thought it was like very uniform and yea they just didn't like the ascetic of it either [laughs] it's just, I used to wear black ones, not because I thought you have to wear black ones, just because I thought black ones were the best, so I don't wanna wear a huge massive green dress, so yea. [inaudible] yea, my parents didn't like that. But I just said something like you know, just, I choose to wear it because it's easy, it covers me, I don't have to wear layers. You know, my top isn't long enough so I have to wear a cardigan. I just thought this is all-in-one. There you go. Bish bash bosh out the door. Erm, yea, they, they got used to it. And gradually I started wearing long tops and trousers or a skirt and a top, they were happier with that.

**R: I'm curious, in your everyday interactions, do you feel there was a difference between when people treated you when you wore an abaya to when you wore trousers or skirts?**

I: Erm, I felt different. I think at one point I started feeling like I stood out a lot. I started feeling like I I, long, black, doesn't look like what everyone else is wearing. I could see headscarf wearing women in jeans or whatever and I would think to be honest once you've got a headscarf on you're Muslim, it doesn't matter if you're in a abaya or jeans or whatever, people, people see you as Muslim, and I'm sure, the niqab is a different question, but I feel like I'm not going get more abuse or more stares wearing an abaya, I mean I would usually wear a cardigan, my arms weren't black, just my dress [laughs] so it just looked like a maxi dress to be honest. I thought people are not gonna give me more than whoever in jeans because once you've got the headscarf on, they know you're Muslim, so it doesn't really matter.

I guess in the city, that whole anonymous kind of, I don't know you, you don't know me, I can say whatever I want to you, it's like less responsibility. people have to be accountable for themselves when they know them and that kind of thing, in a village. In the city you can walk past a person, make a comment and you'll never see that person again. It's like the whole keyboard warrior thing isn't it, it's I guess, in the city you're more anonymous like you are online, er yea. Behind the screen or behind the crowd.

Oh I forgot one thing, I read this really interesting thing, it actually happened to me in Exeter, some of my friends, we were together, a big group of us, myself, it was my friend [name] who is visibly white, er, Czech, oh I can't remember, initially his parents are from like Eastern Europe and he's Jewish erm, and there was like a Lebanese friend of mine, quite pale skin, Palestinian, again quite pale, we had Nigerian friend there who wears a headscarf and oh yea, who else did we have, Pakistani friend, a guy, another friend of mine, she was Sudanese, also wears a headscarf. There was a big group of us, quite diverse, and we were just being crazy, playing games and stuff and we were playing truth or dare and this, there's like a fire exit in this like living space which was my friend's house, and we saw these three people walk passed, and [laughs] one of my friends said I dare you to go open the door or something, or say something, but these

three people ended up coming in, two guys and a woman, they were like local Exeter people, extremely drunk and that was very interesting. Like half an hour, the two guys were too drunk to speak, weren't very aggressive, he was speaking really slowly like [speaks very slowly] why do the women wear those things [laughs] and the women she was less drunk and a lot more aggressive, and she was going, this is really interesting, she was going round the room, and basically apart from myself, she was going round the room, and the one I told you about the Eastern European guy, erm, she was like, you're black, you're black, you're black, she called everyone black even the very pale looking Arab guy and the Pakistani guy, she called everyone black and she came to me and goes you're white but you got that thing on your head, and to the other guy, you're white and you look like an f-ing rock star, because he's got long hair. But it was interesting. But they were very Islamophobic, and xenophobic, all packaged into one. It was the most weird 20 minutes of my life. Why did we do that?! They weren't really Islamophobic, we were just catching but when we got them to leave that's when she got all, oh you've got to all get out of our country you foreigners, blah blah blah, and then they left. But yea I can't remember exactly what she was saying but it consisted of us all being foreign and me being white with a thing on my head and everyone else being black.

**R: But she recognised you as white?**

I: Yes, yea that was interesting, yea, it's true.

**R: Yea. So, it's the opposite of the other experience you had when you were doing the money collecting in the bucket.**

I: Yea, I have both, from both British people and like Arabs and Asians and other Muslims. Some Arabs think I'm Arab or some Asians think I'm Arab, and one white people think I'm white and somewhat people think I'm foreign. [sighs] So, yea. Oh, there was one other- does that bother you though because I was in France, I wasn't in the UK?

**R: No that's fine.**

I: Er, I was in France waiting for er, a bus, and this woman started talking to me. She was, what was it? I guess she was confused because I was speaking English, and she was confused, she was like where, where are you from then? In French she was asking, because she couldn't speak English and I- I was like, I'm British, I'm from Wales, see what I was saying about saying I'm British when I'm abroad? Because people get confused otherwise. I was like yea I'm British, I'm from Wales, blah blah blah, and she was like, she was confused, like genuinely, she was like why is she dressed like that? What's going on? And her friend was like oh obviously she's a convert! You know, you know, she's from the UK but she's a convert blah blah blah. And she was like ah,

slavery [laughs] and walked onto the bus because her bus came. It was a bit- because obviously it sounds weird because it made more sense in French, it was *l'esclavage* or whatever and then she just walked on to the bus so I was like okay whatever, one person didn't know where I was from and was super confused and the other person like you know it clicked.

**R: I suppose some people do realise, they know about converts, conversion. And you said some people, even like Muslims, Arabs think that you're Arab-**

I: Yea they like talk to me in Arabic sometimes. And I understand some words and sometimes I respond in Arabic to see what happens. I actually [laughs] I remember one time, it's quite naughty but one time someone was like, oh where are you from, in Arabic she asked me, and I was like oh I'm from Palestine and she was like aah okay, and she carried on because she believed me, and I was like I'm sorry I'm only joking, I'm not, I'm Welsh, but I just wanted to see if you'd believe me, and she did [laughs] and yea. The funny thing is though, I remember being at a mosque party, it was a women only party for Eid and erm [...] I met a Palestinian woman, and we were just playing the game of where do you think I'm from game, and because it was women only I didn't have a scarf on and I think I look very white, like I dunno. And she was like oh erm, are you from Palestine, are you from Jordan, blah blah blah. I guess because without the headscarf, I guess because of the environment I was in maybe. Because I was in a mosque, because I could pronounce Arabic words, because I could say things like *Maghreb* [sunset] I dunno, it's I dunno, maybe but she just assumed I was Middle Eastern, that I was from *Shaam* [Levant]. From the area, from the Levant, like I haven't actually- like she wasn't surprised, she was oh okay. But then yea, she was Palestinian, and she actually had blue eyes and light hair and so maybe that had an impact on her thought process I dunno.

**R: Great. So, changing topics a bit, thinking about the way Muslims are depicted in the media, how does all of that make you feel?**

I: Erm, it's annoying. I know it's an industry, like I know some newspapers, that's how, that's how they sell, like that's their kind of ethos, like they want to aggravate, they wanna make things look as sensationalist as possible, like regardless of if it's Muslim or something else, they kinda, that's their kind of style of writing, I think it's so irresponsible, it's so horrible, that just to make money, just to sell papers and all of that you kind of in effect ruin some people's lives, erm yea I just find it erm terrible, I find, I find it horrible, I find it like [...] how can it be allowed, do you know what I mean. It's just [...]

I've also seen a few articles where it's sort of like Muslim convert this and convert that. I supposed it's kind of like painting a negative picture of converts I suppose. But I- I- I guess I notice Muslim more, than convert. I kind of really, I remember erm one Muslim headline it was like Muslim convert beheads woman in garden or something. To be fair

that was completely wrong, He was- he was previously Muslim and since converted to something else, but you know that was quite annoying in the fact that it was just completely misleading. It was like oh he used to be a Muslim, let's just put Muslim but you know it's just this opportunism or oh what dirt can we find on him er or her, and then they'll just use anything to make it a bit more scary, a bit more whatever. I dunno, it's just like white British like either Agnostic, Atheist or Christian, that's kind of just the norm. And if it's just that that's kind of like too boring. You have to add like some other kind of identity markers to make it more er, more of a story. You know I was thinking about it, I was watching Great British Bake Off last night and I know the Daily Mail will be happy this year, there's just three white people, because the previous year, you know, it was like, you know there was a Muslim woman in a headscarf and then you had erm, the, I think he's South Asian, and then you had the doctor, okay what can we get on him oh he's gay. And then finally they get to the white guy okay he's- he's normal, oh oh he's a househusband, he stays at home, he's a modern man and it's just like anything to discredit someone who is slightly different, or very different it's so annoying. It's like this small er [...] kind of [...] sphere of normal [...] and even within that so many things are picked on, oh you're too poor, you're too rich, you're too this, you're too that, it's just- just, it's just ridiculous. It's just, no one can be left alone to anything [...] ah media [...] hate the media [laughs] obviously it has the power for good as well but certain- certain media like the Daily Mail and specifically, what's the other one that has a crusader on it, is it Daily Express? [sighs]. [laughter]. It's just- ugh. I can't- I can't even get my head around it.

This is nice, this is like a counselling session. [laughter].

**R: I don't know if I have many more questions really. It's gone much faster than I thought. I dunno if you have anything that you feel like you want to add?**

I: Hmm, I dunno. I don't think so. I was just gonna say that it's really good that you're doing this research. Just maybe I've said it already but the whole simplification of identities, it really does my head in.

**R: Thanks. Yea, I just think there's more to it. There's a lot of research on conversion, why they convert, what as the factors that lead people to convert, and I just wasn't interested in that. I was more interested in people's everyday lived experience and how all of these have a bearing on. Obviously that history gives context but-**

I: I suppose one thing that's made of think of something now. The reason that is so interesting, specifically when focusing on white Muslims, especially if they're converts and have converted later on in life which I guess most people do, is that erm, for a long period of time you do fit within the category of normal. Erm, and to be fair most men even if they have a beard, they just look like hipster, I guess they can go one step further and wear like a hat and a *thawb* [robe] and everything and that I guess will put them in

the bracket of an identifiable Muslim, fine, but that, I don't think, I'm sure that's quite a small minority when it comes to male converts and they're smaller than women anyway in terms of how many people convert. When it comes to women who choose to wear headscarf or whatever else, niqab etcetera erm, although you are identifiable as a Muslim, publicly, you can always go back. You can always change the, under all the pressures we've been talking about, it can lead someone to say you know what I've had enough. I can still be Muslim, if I take off this scarf I just blend in, you can go back to that kind of comfort zone, privilege if you like of kind of just erm, just blending in with everyone else, and just be normal. Quote unquote normal. [laughs].

**R: Actually, that kind of makes me think of something. I know you mentioned you're looking for a job at the moment, but have you worked previously while being Muslim?**

I: Yes.

**R: And how- Are those in 'Muslim spaces', or how-**

I: Erm, yea I worked in an Arab restaurant, so a Muslim context, obviously everyone coming in is not gonna be Islamophobic probably because they're going to an Arab restaurant and most Arabs are Muslim, well I think most Arabs are Muslim, I'm not sure [laughs] so yea, that was fine, and so was working with Muslims and the customers know that it's a Muslim owned company so yea. And then I worked in the cafe in [a large high street store], erm, which was a non-Muslim environment. My employers, my employer was amazing, she really wanted to make sure everyone was happy and all of that. She was like if you have any problems, at the interview, or maybe after the interview when I signed the contract she was like if you have any problems handling pork and stuff like that, so she was really like, she wanted to accommodate for like everyone which was really good and my fellow colleagues were fine, I got along with everyone. I remember a customer, I remember one he was really nice, he was a priest, ah it's really nice to see, oh we're you know, we're brothers and sisters and all that. it was that kind of vibe. And another customer told me that we were taking over the world [laughs] and I just humoured him and then he was fine, he was like yea yea you're taking over the world, and I was like oh really? And he was like yea yea because Muslims are becoming more than Christians now, and I was like oh, oh what else did he come up and say to me, oh yea your lot are everywhere [laughs], and erm yea. And after that, I finished uni and I've been teaching English as a foreign language, erm, that was in Cardiff, I worked in two places and I mainly taught like immigrants and refugees and at one point all my students were Muslim, and another point it was a mix, and teaching another class, further up in Wales, in The Valleys, high UKIP percentage of votes, and I actually did a course in Cardiff about the far-right and it was an ex-far-righter who had been in far-right groups for 15 years and he was talking about far-right groups and his experiences, and he was, he talked about specific areas where these groups are active, and he talked about this place where I was working, he talked about Merthyr Tydfil and

after that I actually, it's dumb because I'd been travelling there for months and months like I am now but after that, and after talking to this Asian lady, she was like oh I never go up to Merthyr on my own, after that I started wearing a beanie hat and a scarf around my neck because I was too scared of, of who was up there, after listening to him and talking to that woman about this area. And yea. Even, when was it? It wasn't the general elections, it was the Welsh Assembly elections and they had big posters everywhere, you know, vote UKIP, on the roundabouts and everything, yea just really put me off and made me scared and I was just like I don't wanna risk my life, I felt like I was risking my lie [laughs] I know it's really dramatic but-

**R: No no, not at all.**

I: But it's like, the groups he was talking about you don't even know about them. Not EDL, worse. So, I was like oh my God, this group called- one that he like, people found out about him. He has to move all the time, like he has a family now he has to move houses frequently because of the threats that he faces from this group that he used to be involved in, and that group is really really big in that area in Wales and I was just terrified after that [laughs]. And I know [...] ah, obviously everything comes down to just you know the chance, or, obviously destiny, anything could happen to me anywhere and anytime. It might not even be Islamophobic, I might even get hit by a bus, I might get punch for another reason in the face [laughs] whatever you know, those things do drive your fear, do have an effect.

**R: How about in relation to employment?**

I: I feel, I know there is institutionalised racism slash discrimination, I know Islamophobia isn't racism but it has been racialised, I know that exists but I always kind of think oh quotas will save me.[laughs] I go into job interviews thinking oh they probably don't have any Muslims, if I'm decent enough they will hire me because a quota will save me. I don't know, yea, I don't, I feel like I haven't had a negative experience in an interview, and I feel like if I haven't got it it's for a valid reason.

**R: Mmm, I guess linking to when you were talking about you how changed and wore a beanie, have you ever, even if you haven't followed through with it, have you thought should I change, should I look less Muslim in some spaces?**

I: Yea, yea, when erm, when my mum was going on to me because I said I was working, teaching, it was a charity and it closed down because they ran out of funding erm, and um, after about a month, and I was job hunting and my mum was like you have to go to the job centre because you know, you're not gonna, you're not having any money and I was like ah God, I don't wanna go, with the stigma attached to the job centre and chavs and you know all that kind of thing, and so I went, but I didn't wear my scarf like this, I tied it behind, wore a shirt whatever, or wore a polo neck because I was just like okay they might not know I'm Muslim if I dress like that, and that is with,

that paired with my pales skin, kind of my, was like, yea I can use, and I- I feel guilty about it, I feel guilty about the fact that some people are born, if you're black you can't peel your black skin off because you feel uncomfortable one day, that's it, you just have to go out and face it erm. Yea. I do think a lot about being anxious in public about being visibly Muslim because and and it's worse when I read the headlines when it's like Muslim murder does this and I'm like ugh is someone gonna take their anger out at me today? Erm, but I always just think to myself firstly of that like people of colour can't do anything about it so why am I gonna be such wimp and just take off my scarf just to kind of make myself feel better, or, I also just think of so many other women, especially for, it's easy I can speak English, I can call 999, I know all the procedures, there's so many women in this country that have bad English skills, I mean I've taught them, worry so much for them, how can they go out there wearing their scarves, wearing their face veils, and I'm gonna take mine off? You know? [laughs] and also because it's a part of my identity as well but that, that really keeps me thinking, you are not taking it off, you are not chickening out when there are other women who are doing [...] doing it. [sighs]

**R: I do have one question. We talked about being showing Muslimness, I was wondering if anyone has ever spoken to you about, or if you've thought about changing names?**

I: I think that's a trend isn't it because I've got some older convert friends who you know are in their 40s and 50s and stuff and it happened a lot more then. I think people know a lot more, they know you don't have to erm, I think, you know, some people did at the time of the Prophet, you know their names were offensive particularly, whatever was offensive at the time so they changed it then but yea, I think you know some people did it, and they think oh I have to do it as well [...] but no I never thought about it.

**R: Did anyone ever mention it to, or encourage you to do that?**

I: Yea, yea I think so I can't remember who exactly. Sometimes they ask, do you have a Muslim name? This is interesting. You know I was talking about before they just took on Muslim names and they've had them for years, and now, when people ask me, when I say no they're like oh good that's well because you don't have to anyway, they're just curious. They're like yea yea you don't need to. Some people do, but actually you can keep your name, it's not compulsory blah blah blah, so I find more people ask me, just want to know if I have and just to tell me you don't have to do it and erm, I think some people, I can't speak for myself because I didn't do it, but I think some people do it for like an identity thing as well. I have one friend who changed her name because she didn't like her name. Her name was [name] and erm, she's been called [name] for years and years. Yea, it's really complex, but I didn't change it because my name is fine, it doesn't mean anything offensive, it's the name my parents gave and I'm gonna keep it. I don't need to change my name. There, and this is a discussion I've had with some friends and my husband, there's no, there's no such thing as a Muslim name anyway

[laughs] yea, they're usually just Arabic, and like Muhammad was called Muhammad before, by non-Muslim parents, so some people were called Abdullah before Islam so [...] the only thing you can say that could be as Muslim names is Prophets' names, different Prophets because it was recommended, it was kind of said name them after good names, such as Prophets' names. But that would only count for men anyway [laughs] so [laughs].

**R: Yea I definitely see a trend with older people I speak to and the expectation of them having to have changed their names when they converted before.**

I: Yea, it's part of the people around, like Muslims here, younger Muslims have read for themselves, it's not passed down knowledge, they've grown up in Britain, religion and culture isn't as confused. I suppose, yea, wherever you're born is gonna kind of effect the way you see things and is gonna effect the way you do things including how you practice your religion, but it's not like, obviously here, culture is gonna effect the way Christianity is practiced and like Christmas, it's gonna be different to obviously Poland or wherever [...] but because there's no deeply engraved Islamic history in Britain there aren't things that are so much confused, like oh this because of Islam but then you find out it has nothing to do with Islam but it's because Islam has been there for such a long time then things just get meshed together. If you have a look at simple things like weddings you know kind of traditions, they vary so much, and like British people get confused, oh Muslim wedding that when they wear red dresses and stuff and you know. India is a good example because you've got a really long Islamic Hindu history, so you see things that are exactly the same, and people will probably say oh that's a religion but it's not, it's nothing to do with religion it's to do with culture. So, yea I want it to be a part of the cultural identity so when people see Muslims, they don't think oh foreign, they think oh, just a minority group within Britain that exists and is part of our culture and our heritage and things like that. It would be nice to get to a point when people see me and they don't think oh convert or, or erm, foreigner, but they just think British Muslim because it's so part in parcel with everything as would with a Christian. They don't think oh that's a Christian, foreigner this that and just you know, they don't think twice about it.

I guess it's like, the number of converts versus different backgrounds, like in a way, convert Muslims, let's say white British convert Muslims they kind of integrate into a new culture as well as a new religion. It's like oh I have to choose am I gonna be an Arab convert, am I gonna be a South Asian convert you know, and that would depend on where you are and where most Muslims in that country come from like in France it's mostly North Africans and America it's a lot of Arabs and there's not so many, South Asians yea, just kind of yea, sometimes a lot of Muslim converts take on extra identities not just the religious ones so a cultural one. It's a big thing, that's not even converts, you'll see like Bengali women in black abayas and that's really not part of that culture, that's a whole other topic.

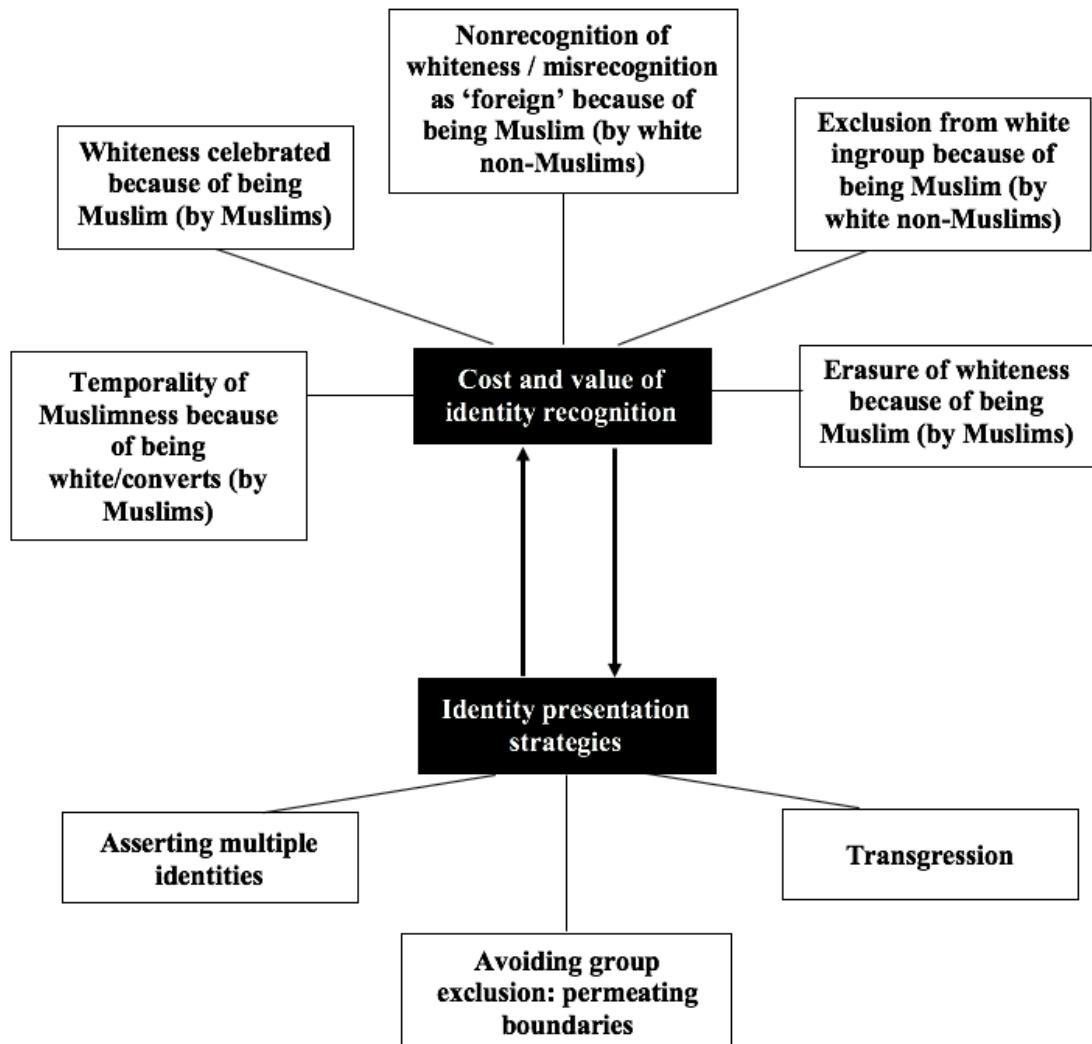
**R: Yea, cool, I don't know if you have anything else you want to add?**

I: No, I can't think of anything.

**R: Okay, so that's it. Thank you.**

**END**

## Appendix 6: Thematic map for Study 2



## Appendix 7: Codebook for Study 2

### Organising theme 1: The cost and value of identity recognition

Basic theme	Code	Description	Example of quote
Whiteness celebrated because of being Muslim (by Muslims)	Put on a pedestal	White Muslims talking of being celebrated by other Muslims because they are white.	<i>"white people still get sort of lorded 'oh my goodness you became Muslim that's so amazing."</i>
	Comparisons to treatment of non-white Muslim converts	White Muslims comparing the way they are treated with the way non-white converts are treated by Muslims.	<i>"I was standing with a really good friend of mine, Michael, who is a revert as well, convert, and we were standing in front of the masjid chatting, and someone came up to the pair of us and looked at me and was sort of 'ah you're a convert mashallah brother, it's so good to meet you, alhadumdulillah. All your sins have been forgiven, you're so much better than us people who were born Muslim', 'yea this brother's a convert as well'. Michael's black. The guy ignored him. Like literally blanked him even though he was another convert there."</i>
Temporality of Muslimness because of being white/converts (by Muslims)	Always seen as a convert (Muslims)	White Muslim talking about the label 'covert' never leaving them regardless of how long they have been Muslim and the assumptions that come with that.	<i>"one thing, this is said to me a lot, ah mashallah you're a convert, you have really high imaan [spirituality] I think when you initially convert maybe, but when you've been a Muslim 10 years, 20, you become like a born-Muslim."</i>
	Commitment to Islam questioned (Muslims)	White Muslim talking about the commitment to Islam being challenged because they have converted.	<i>"I remember once I went to meet a erm, a sister and her family, looking into marriage and stuff, it was a [sic] old Bengali uncle he gets to me, er, 'you've been Muslim for five years now, you planning on staying Muslims?'"</i>

	‘Just a phase’ (non-Muslims)	White Muslims describing their conversion being seen as a phase by non-Muslims.	<i>“I think everybody kind of thought at first it was going to be a phase, 6 months, 8 months, d’you know what I mean, he’ll be back down the pub and I think, what? 12 years later? Not quite yet!”</i>
Erasure of whiteness because of being Muslim (by Muslims)	Expectation to wear Asian/Arab traditional clothes	When white Muslims described the expectations upon them by other Muslims to wear traditional cultural clothes of the local Muslim community.	<i>“As soon as I became Muslim, almost the next day, people [other Muslims] expected me to start wearing the hijab, dressing a certain way – even for Eid, to wear cultural clothes. Those aren’t my clothes! I’m British!”</i>
	Expectation to change name	When white Muslims described the expectations upon them to change their name to Islamic names rather than keeping their original English names.	<i>“Changing your name is very much expected. People are challenging it more now, but that expectation is still there as though because now you are Muslim you must have a Muslim name”.</i>
Non-recognition of whiteness/misrecognition as ‘foreign’ because of being Muslim (by white non-Muslims)	Hijab = foreign	White Muslim women discussing the hijab as a marker of foreignness and non-Britishness.	<i>“I was like “I am English” and she was like “Oh, I thought you were foreign because of the scarf on your head”. She wasn’t rude, but she just assumed I wasn’t English because of the hijab.”</i>
	Surprise at speaking good English	White Muslim talking about how they are assumed to not speak good English when their Muslimness is visible e.g. through hijab or Muslim names on a form.	<i>“because of my hijab it’s like they think I won’t be able to speak English so when I talk normally without an accent, they’re always so shocked and you can see it on their faces.</i>

Exclusion from white ingroup because of being Muslim (by white non-Muslims)	Loss of culture: 'acting Asian'	White Muslims discussing reactions to their conversion and the comments family and friends made about them 'changing cultures' and 'becoming Asian'.	<i>"when I converted people kind of couldn't believe it, I faced a lot of backlash, some family members and friends really struggled with it, they sort of felt I was no longer one of them, as though I'd given up my culture and were expecting me to start acting Asian, even with food and things like that."</i>
	Muslim = 'one of them'	White Muslims discussing non-Muslims seeing them as Other.	<i>"I could be talking to someone and then for some reason it comes up, or I say for example, I was in the mosque because I'm telling a story and I haven't thought to censor myself and you can see it on their face, it just changes, there becomes a distance, like you're not one of us you're one of them."</i>

## Organising theme 2: Strategic identity presentation

Avoiding group exclusion	Performing Muslimness when among other Muslims	White Muslims describing how they play up their Muslimness around other Muslims so as to fit in more.	<i>"when I go into Muslim spaces, I do wear the hijab, I'm more easily identified as Muslim and there are no questions regarding my faith."</i>
	Use of Arabic language when among other Muslims	White Muslims describing how they use Arabic words and phrases to fit in more with other heritage Muslim communities.	<i>"I sometimes say salaam [Arabic greeting] to other Muslims when I pass them in the street. It's always a bit funny because they are taken by surprised and sometimes, they don't know how to respond because they're not sure if I'm Muslim, if I just know the greeting, or if I'm going to attack them! But I do say alhamdulilah and mashallah a lot more around Muslims, I don't know why, maybe I do it subconsciously to prove I'm not secretly MI5!"</i>

	Consciously passing as non-Muslim	White Muslims describing how they remove markers of their Muslimness in predominantly non-Muslim spaces so as to alleviate possible harm or discomfort.	<i>"I was going on a coach trip to Cornwall. It was all old white couples or individuals or groups of friends. I wasn't going to wear my hijab, I would stand out."</i>
	Beard as ambiguous	White Muslim men recognising that their use of the beard as a marker of their Muslimness is also ambiguous and therefore gives them privilege.	<i>"because I'm white, and only have a beard that can be interpreted as me being a hipster, my Islam is less salient in the eyes of the outsiders"</i>
	Men passing vs. women passing	White Muslims discuss the different abilities to pass as non-Muslim between men and women, especially where visible markers of religious identity are present.	<i>"I can traverse mainstream society with my faith virtually being unknown, less so for Muslims who happen to be from a minority ethnic background, or Muslims who happen to be female, or Muslims who happen to be female from a minority ethnic background who observe a certain style of dress."</i>
	Guilt of passing	White Muslims describing the guilt they feel regarding their ability to pass.	<i>"I know I can just take my hijab off and no one will know, I feel bad doing that because others can't"</i>
Transgression	'Playing dumb': challenging cultural traditions among Muslim communities	White Muslims describe playing to their recognition as converts and therefore not knowing much about Islam in order to challenge traditions they do not agree with.	<i>"it's not unheard of to play a bit dumb to sort of a lot of cultural situations. Especially if it's doing something that I don't think is a bit forward thinking"</i>

	Challenging non-Muslims negative perceptions of Islam	White Muslims describing how they sometimes challenge non-Muslims negative perceptions of Islam.	<i>“I normally just introduce myself as Matthew, and one of the reasons is we've only been here for 4 years and I'm- well, I know a lot of people in the area now but I've noticed a lot of them tend to be quite negative towards Muslims so it both allows me to hear what they are saying, keep my ear to the ground, the other thing is if they know me as Matthew and then later on they discover I am Muslim, after getting to know me, maybe that will help give them a better impression, whereas if they already know I'm Muslim they'll probably jump to conclusions already and no-one will bother getting to know me”.</i>
	Challenging incompatibility	White Muslims describing the importance of challenging the notions of being British and Muslim as incompatible.	<i>“People don't know. They think Islam is something new, something bad that's a threat that has come about in the last 20 years or so. They know nothing else. They see being Muslim and British as incompatible. So, in terms of identity and perception there's a very big role for western Muslims in changing perceptions of identity not only for them individually as Muslims, but for Islam as a whole and I think that's what is really exciting and interesting about converts and Westernised Muslims”.</i>
Identity assertion	Holding onto British cultural practices, especially with family (when challenged by Muslims)	White Muslims describing how they are challenged by Muslims about their participation in non-Muslim traditions and celebrations and their determination to continue.	<i>“they challenged me about whether I was going to celebrate Christmas with my family. It's ridiculous, they're my family, I can't just ignore them, forget them, it was like I've now started a new life, so everything else is in my past.”</i>

	Holding onto markers of their ethnicity (when challenged by Muslims)	White Muslims described holding onto markers of their ethnicity like their English names when challenged by Muslims.	<i>“When I meet Muslims who don’t know me and they ask me my name- ‘What’s your name?’ ‘My name is James’. ‘No, what’s your Muslim name? ‘And I’m like, ‘James’.”</i>
	Redefining British Islam	White Muslims’ describing the importance of an Islam that reflects their lives in Britain.	<i>“there’s a British Islam, we have a British sense of humour, we, we have the same cultural reference points you know, we shouldn’t be ashamed of the fact that we are British Muslims. There’s nothing wrong with British Islam, but we need to dictate the terms of what that is rather than having it thrust upon us.”</i>

## **Appendix 8: Example of survey used in Study 3 (English name, no signifier condition)**

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Start of Block: Start

### **Perceiving others based on limited information**

Thank you for showing interest in participating in this study. Please read through the aims of the research and our ethics declaration below. You will then be asked if you agree or disagree to participating in this study.

#### **About this study:**

This study looks at the assessments we make about people's characteristics and who they are where limited information is provided. You will be asked a number of questions in this online survey, all of which are close-ended. It will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

This is part of a research project being undertaken by myself, Amena Amer, under the supervision of Dr Ilka Gleibs, at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

#### **Ethics declaration:**

This study has been ethically approved by the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science Ethics Committee at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study.

You are entitled to withdraw at any point in time without providing a reason.

If you decide to participate, your answers will be anonymised, and your details will be kept confidential.

Only myself and my supervisor will have access to these details, and they will not be made public.

If you require any further information, please contact me at [a.amer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:a.amer@lse.ac.uk).

---

I consent to taking part in this study.

Agree (1)

Disagree (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If I consent to taking part in this study. = Disagree*

---

Page Break

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Q85 Before you start, if you have a Prolific ID, please enter it here.

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Page Break

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Q81

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Page Break

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Q48 In this study, we are interested in your opinions. Please respond to all the questions honestly. You will not be judged on any of the answers you give.

**End of Block: Start**

---

**Start of Block: Condition 1: Emily**

**Please read the following information carefully:**



***This is Emily. She just moved in next door to you. She knocked on your door to introduce herself and has invited you over for a cup of tea.***

Emily\_mc Can you see a photograph of Emily?

Yes (1)

No (2)

X→

Emily\_bi How likely are you to accept the invitation? (1 'not at all' to 7 'extremely')

(Not at all) 1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 (5)

6 (6)

(Extremely) 7 (7)

X↔ X→

Emily\_r In your opinion, how likely are the following statements to be true? (1 'not at all' to 7 'extremely')

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
Emily is British (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Emily is English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Emily is Muslim (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
Emily is white (4)	<input type="radio"/>						



Emily\_pj1 To what extent do you think Emily is...

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
Trustworthy (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Friendly (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Open-minded (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
Likeable (4)	<input type="radio"/>						
Nice (6)	<input type="radio"/>						
Respectable (7)	<input type="radio"/>						
Interesting (8)	<input type="radio"/>						
Deceitful (9)	<input type="radio"/>						
Devious (10)	<input type="radio"/>						
Truthful (11)	<input type="radio"/>						

Emily\_attractive How attractive do you find Emily?

- (Not at all) 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- (Extremely) 7 (7)

---

Page Break

---

x↔

Emily\_s How similar do you see yourself to Emily? (1 'not at all' to 7 'extremely')

- (Not at all) 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- (Extremely) 7 (7)

---

☒ x↔

Emily\_id Please rate how much you identify with the following groups.

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
I identify with being British (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
I identify with being Muslim (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
I identify with being English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
I identify with being white (4)	<input type="radio"/>						



Emily\_id\_sim Please rate how similar you see yourself to the following groups.

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
I am similar to the average Muslim person (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
I am similar to the average British people (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
I am similar to the average English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish person (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
I am similar to the average white person (4)	<input type="radio"/>						

Page Break

---

**Please read the following information carefully:**



*This is Emily again. While talking to Emily you find out that she defines herself as a 'white British Muslim'.*

**The following questions focus on your opinions about Emily and her expression of her identity. Please remember that we are interested in your genuine and honest opinion.**

---

Emily\_mc2 Please answer whether the following statement is true or false.

*Emily identifies herself as a white British Muslim.*

- True (1)
- False (2)

---



Emily\_aff Please rate the extent to which Emily's comment made you feel...

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
Annoyed (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Irritated (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Happy (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
Offended (4)	<input type="radio"/>						
Content (5)	<input type="radio"/>						
Pleased (6)	<input type="radio"/>						
Delighted (7)	<input type="radio"/>						
Angry (8)	<input type="radio"/>						
Indifferent (9)	<input type="radio"/>						
Unmoved (10)	<input type="radio"/>						



Emily\_pj2 To what extent do you think Emily is... (1 'not at all' to 7 'extremely')

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
Trustworthy (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Friendly (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Open-minded (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
Likeable (4)	<input type="radio"/>						
Nice (6)	<input type="radio"/>						
Respectable (7)	<input type="radio"/>						
Interesting (8)	<input type="radio"/>						
Deceitful (9)	<input type="radio"/>						
Devious (10)	<input type="radio"/>						
Truthful (11)	<input type="radio"/>						

Page Break



Emily\_r2

While Emily identifies as a white British Muslim, please rate the extent to which you think Emily can be...

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
Truly British (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Truly White (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Truly Muslim (3)	<input type="radio"/>						

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Page Break -----



**Emily\_dt The next few questions focus on your general opinion about people like Emily. Please be genuine and honest with your answers.**

Please rate the extent to which you think....

	(Not at all) 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	(Extremely) 7 (7)
People like Emily blur the boundaries between white British people and Muslims (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
People like Emily threaten the differences between white British people and Muslims (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
People like Emily reduce divisions between white British people and Muslims (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
People like Emily who identify as Muslim threaten the integrity of white British people (4)	<input type="radio"/>						

People  
like Emily  
who  
identify as  
white  
British  
make it  
harder to  
tell who is  
Muslim  
and who is  
not (5)

---

End of Block: Condition 1: Emily

---

**Finally, just some information about you.**

---

---

Age What is your age?

---

Male (1)

Female (2)

If neither, please specify: (3)

---

Eth\_grp Please specify your ethnic group.

- White (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish) (1)
- White other background (2)
- Black (African, Caribbean, other Black background) (3)
- Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) (4)
- Asian other background (5)
- Arab/Middle Eastern (6)
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic group (please specify) (7)

---

- None of the above (please specify) (8)

---

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Rel Please specify your religion/beliefs.

- Christian (1)
- Muslim (2)
- Jewish (3)
- Hindu (4)
- Sikh (5)
- Agnostic (6)
- Atheist (7)
- None (8)
- None of the above (please specify) (9)

---




Rel2 How religious are you?

- (Not at all) 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- (Extremely) 7 (7)
- Not applicable (0)

---



po How would you describe your political orientation?

- Left (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6)
- Right (7)

---

Page Break

Q15 If you have any feedback or would like to share comments you have about the study please do so here.

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End of Block: Demographic questions

## Appendix 9: Photographs used in Study 3

The following photographs were used for Experiment 1a and 1b. The first was used in the No Signifier and Muslim conditions (both for Emily and Fatima) and the second was used in the Hijab condition (for both Emily and Fatima).



The following photographs were used for Experiment 2a and 2b. The first was used in the No Signifier and Muslim conditions (both for Jack and Ahmed) and the second was used in the Beard condition (for both Jack and Ahmed).



## Appendix 10: Supplementary analysis for additional measures in Study 3

### Measures

All measure used a 7-point Likert scale (1='Not at all' to 7='Extremely') unless mentioned otherwise. The order of items within all the dependent variables were counterbalanced.

#### Measures at Time 1:

*Positive personality traits-Time 1.* This included 10 items ("Trustworthy, friendly, open minded, likeable nice, respectable, interesting, truthful, and deceitful devious – reversed items";  $\alpha=.90$ ) where participants were asked likelihood of these traits being attributed to the target.

*Similarity to target.* This was also measured using a one-item scale: "*How similar do you see yourself to [Emily]?*"

*Participant identification.* This measure consisted of four one-item scales (Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013) asking them how much they identify with the following groups: "being British", "being Muslim", "being English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish" and "being white".

*Participant similarity to groups.* Participants similarity to the average person from each of the relevant social groups to the study (adapted from Leach et al., 2008) was also asked.

#### Measure at Time 2:

*Positive personality traits- Time 2.* This measure used identical items to Time 1 ( $\alpha=.93$ ).

### **Results: Experiment 1a**

Analyses were conducted using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No signifiers) design.

There were no interactions between Name and Signifier for any of the above measures.

### **Results: Experiment 1b**

Analyses were conducted using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Hijab, No signifiers) design.

There were no interactions between Name and Signifier for any of the above measures.

### **Results: Experiment 1c**

Analyses were conducted using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, No signifiers) design.

There were no interactions between Name and Signifier for any of the above measures.

### **Results: Experiment 1d**

Analyses were conducted using a between-subjects ANOVA with a 2 (Name: English, Arabic) X 3 (Signifier: Muslim, Beard, No signifiers) design.

Interactions between Name and Signifiers were found on the participants identification as English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish (ESWNI)  $F(2, 162)=5.305$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $\eta_p^2=.061$ , and as white  $F(2, 162)=10.758$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta_p^2=.117$ .

Participants in the Muslim condition identified as more ESWNI when in the target had an Arabic name ( $M=3.80$ ) compared with an English name ( $M=2.00$ )  $F(1, 162)=8.105, p=.005, \eta_p^2=.048, 95\% \text{ CI } [.55, 3.05]$ . When the target had an Arabic name, participants identified as more ESWNI when in the Muslim condition ( $M=3.80$ ) than when in the Beard condition ( $M=2.00$ )  $F(2, 162)=3.681, p=.022, \eta_p^2=.043, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.84, 3.24]$ . When the

Participants in the Muslim condition identified as less white when in the target had an Arabic name ( $M=1.50$ ) compared with an English name ( $M=4.13$ )  $F(1, 162)=34.073, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.174, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.3.52, -1.74]$ . When the target had an English name, participants identified as less white when in the Muslim condition ( $M=4.13$ ) than those in the No Signifier condition ( $M=1.40$ ) and the Beard condition ( $M=1.94$ )  $F_{nosigner}(2, 162)=19.338, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.198, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.11, 3.27]; F_{nosigner}(2, 162)=19.338, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.198, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.64, 3.82]$ .