Anti-Essentialist Marketing
An Alternative View of Consumers' Identity'

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This work is dedicated to my mother and my late father who would have been so proud to know that I have finally finished.
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Abstract

One problem with the traditional marketing segmentation view of consumer markets is that it treats social categories as an ontology, which somehow becomes independent of its own members. It assumes that the self is required to adjust to its segment. In my research, I follow writers such as Hall (1996) who claim that consumer identity is not a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being but a process of becoming. The meaning of social economic class, Britishness, religion, masculinity and so forth, are subject to continual change. Identity then becomes a ‘cut’ or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning of the individual, which makes meaning possible.

My primary research focuses on one cultural category - second generation British South Asian. This is a group of consumers who are required to negotiate with multiple discourses – local, global, past, present, future, western, eastern, religious, national, popular culture and more - and with many social and cultural categories - British society, South Asian community, county of origin, religion, professional identity and others. The mainstream literature takes an essentialist view when analysing this group treating ethnic minority consumers as acculturating individuals who hold a hyphenated identity and who have to balance pressures from two sides of the hyphen- South Asian and British

In my research I take inspiration from Hall (1996) and treat ethnicity in its de-totalised, or deconstructed forms, recognising ethnicity as a concept that cannot be thought of in the ‘old way’ as representing essential, discrete differences between groups. Ethnicity and race are conceptualised here as socially constructed, relationally and culturally located

My data collection strategy is designed to help participants (Sample size of 13) to explore the landscape of their self by eliciting life narratives and their constituent attachments. The data were collected in two stages. The initial phase is based on the collection of 2 collages one of self-identity and one of shopping experience. The objective of this phase was to give the participants an opportunity to explore and map the different discursive influences in their lives. The second stage uses a narrative interview where the collages were used as a guide for the structure of the conversation.

The findings of this research confirm a picture of self-identity as a ‘Field of Discursivity’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) where self-identity can be viewed as a field in which no one discourse can fully master the others. Consequently, ‘who one is’ becomes an open question, with a shifting answer depending upon the positions available between one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices. This understanding is the foundation of my claim that traditional marketing discussion rests on a flawed assumption which renders segmentation strategy incompatible with current market reality.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning;

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1.0 Chapter one - Introduction

Of the many men whom I am, whom we are, I cannot settle on a single one. They are lost to me under the cover of clothing They have departed for another city.

Pablo Neruda (We are many)

Marketing literature has engaged in long standing debates about the right approach to markets. Recently, the very possibility of these debates has been questioned. The whole tradition of argument about ‘the market’ is rejected on the grounds that it assumes an ‘essentialist’ view. Traditionally, marketing assumes it is possible to speak about ‘the market’. Some of the founders of modern marketing such as McCarthy (1960) and Kotler (1967) have characterised marketing as a decision-making activity directed at satisfying the customer at a profit by targeting a market and then making optimal decisions about the appropriate marketing mix.

Another founder of modern marketing Wendell R. Smith (1956) in his work ‘Product Differentiation and Market Segmentation as Alternative Marketing Strategies’ admits that the market is heterogenic when he says: ‘there is a lack of homogeneity or close similarity among the items offered to the market by individual manufacturers of various products’ (p.5). Smith goes on and concedes that the market is not a complete whole: ‘Today’s advertising and promotion tends to emphasise appeals to selective rather than primary buying motives’ (p.5). However, he suggests that marketing strategy is designed to ‘bring about the convergence of individual market demands for a variety of products upon a single or limited offering to the market’ (p.5) and he promotes viewing ‘a heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogeneous markets’ (p.5).

Similar to Veblen’s (1898, p.16) early work, traditional marketing sees the consumer as: ‘a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogenous globule of desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift about the area, but leave him intact’. The marketing concept view is, therefore, linked to ‘economic
determinism’, which attributes primacy to the economic structure over the individual politics in the construction of social reality. The essentialist view of marketing assumes that consumers can define themselves using words that have stable referents and the social categories to which ‘they belong’ reflect an essential underlying identity. By this token there will be stable truths to be found and an essence of, for example, femininity or social class. I would like to claim that this traditional marketing discussion rests on a wrong assumption and this renders it incompatible with current market reality.

This thesis describes consumers’ identity as a continually shifting set of subject positions. Thus, similarly to Edwards (1997), my research will claim that the essentialist description ignores the reality where everyday consumers’ accounts are full of ontological claims.

This alternative view has important implications for marketing because current market reality proves difficult to understand and represent using traditional marketing perspectives. Firat (1992) explains that postmodernism considerably affects the way that marketing organisations conduct business. This development is well covered in the marketing conversation and many writers have generally focused on the implicit impact of postmodernism on marketing (for example: Brown, 1993; Firat, 1992; van Raaij, 1993), yet the discussion on anti-essentialist markets and the attempt to understand their impact on marketing strategy and practice have received little attention.

Therefore, the interest of my thesis is to shift the focus from social and cultural categories to the individual consumer. I will also try to describe the individual as a member of a cultural category. Conversely, marketing, like other social sciences, has tended to neglect the individual, preferring to treat consumers simply as microversions of larger social entities, and imputing to them consciousness modelled on those of the groups to which they belong.
In order to appreciate the complexity of social formations we must take account of self-consciousness, individuals’ awareness of themselves and their authorship of their social contexts and conditions. Drawing on the experience of participants that are members of one cultural category — second generation British families from South Asian origins — my main research question will be: How do individuals, born to families with South Asian origins and living in Great Britain, perceive and describe their self-identity or identities?

In addressing this question I will explore the cultural sources to which the British South Asian individual goes to find inspiration when trying to describe or constitute self-identity and the way they negotiate with the different cultural circles in their lives (local, ethnic, national/s, global, life styles etc.). I will try to find out what, if any, is the place/contribution of brands, possessions and commercial messages in the process of self-identity/identities construction of these individuals.

By doing this I will try to demonstrate that concepts such as ‘segments’, ‘target group’, ‘culture’, ‘society’, ‘market’, ‘social relations’ and others should be approached from the self upward. I will try to show how social and cultural forms and processes such as rituals, symbolism, rhetoric, socialisation, ethnicity, race, national identity — all very relevant for the understanding of consumption and interpretation of marketing messages (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998) — are shaped and interpreted by the creative self.
1.1. Structure of the thesis

The Literature Review chapter (chapter 2) of this thesis will not follow the traditional structure. Instead it will offer a concise review of the key theoretical developments of post-structuralist, postmodern marketing and the ethnic marketing literature. Alternatively I will thread the majority of the literature discussion throughout the finding chapter. In order to guide the reader through this thesis, I present here a short explanation for this decision.

My research follows participatory research strategy; the idea of this strategy is based upon the notion of conducting research with the research participants and not on them (see detailed explanation in Methodology chapter). The participatory research paradigm – which may be traced to such figures as the Columbian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (Borda and Rahman, 1991) and the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire (see review in Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) – can be seen as challenging the traditional ‘researcher-researched’ dichotomy on two fronts (Truman and Raine, 2001):

- Participants are integral part of the whole research process.
- There are no universal laws of human behaviour that can be measured, apprehended and manipulated.

Similarly, Lincoln (2001, p.126) explains that participatory research demands different way to conduct the research, he says: ‘the shift in relationship between researcher and researched ... is so pronounced as to make ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ nearly archaic terminology ... a blurring of boundaries between the two ... ruptures the old hierarchy’.

Clearly to do this with authenticity requires cultivation of deep respect for, and openness to whatever the participants bring to the research. Smith, at el. (2002) suggest that to create "authentic" participatory research we need to create communities of learning and situations where there is no ‘researcher’ at all as a distinct actor:
My fundamental concern is based on the premise that a detailed literature review conducted at the outset may impose existing frameworks, hypotheses or other theoretical ideas upon the participants which would in turn undermine the focus, authenticity and quality of the my research. Therefore I follow the advice of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who are against conducting a literature review in the substantive area of research at an early stage of the research process, they say: ‘An effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study’ (1967, p. 37). Glaser (1992) even goes further and suggests that researchers must ‘learn not to know’ and avoid engagement with existing literature prior to entering the field. Therefore, in my dissertation data analysis and literature review occur concurrently complementing each other.

Lastly, on a more pragmatic level, given the power I give to the participants to co-determine the content of my research and its unpredictable nature, the literature most relevant to the research may not actually be known at the outset, and so conducting a time-consuming, extensive review of publications in a specific substantive area may be wasteful and inefficient, a point which is also articulated by Dick (2007) and Locke (2001).

Consequently, the structure of this thesis is organised as follows: Chapter two presents a generic perspective on the key theoretical developments of post-structuralist, postmodern marketing and the ethnic marketing literature. It will also offer a philosophical perspective on the main issues of this thesis; the importance of discourse as social construction is emphasised.

Chapter three details the research journey, the research design, methods and type of analysis chosen. It also addresses the main contradiction and challenges involved in anti-essentialist research.

Chapter four looks at participants’ accounts of everyday life and more specifically their ethnic identity and other cultural influences. These accounts are synthesised
into a series of explanatory frameworks. The theoretical implications of the use of discourses practice in social construction are discussed.

Chapter five offers some tentative implications for marketing strategy of the discursive positioning and identity of individuals. I then stress what I see as my contributions to knowledge. I also reflect upon the study as a whole before making some suggestions for further research.

In addition to a full reference list, a set of appendices is also included. As part of warranting my analytical claims, these appendices cover a variety of further methodological details, plus samples and summaries of certain elements of my analytic approach.
I hope that the findings of my research will be of great interest not only to marketing scholars but to business practitioners, government agencies and other social sciences.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Marketing and consumer behaviour literature sought to understand how consumption patterns reflect and reproduce social structures and collectivities. Elliott (1997) explains that in postmodernity the consumption of symbolic meanings, particularly through the use of advertising as a cultural commodity, provides the individual with the opportunity to construct, maintain and communicate identity and social meanings.

McCracken (1986, p.15) for example, says: ‘This is the world of everyday experience in which the phenomenal world presents itself to the senses of the individual, fully shaped and constituted by the beliefs and assumptions of his/her culture’. I will describe this view of marketing as structural because of its focus on the effect of social structures such as social class, nationality, gender, sexuality or ethnic groups as determinants of consumer behaviour.

Multicultural society has been seen as an amalgamation of essential cultural groups within multi-ethnic societies (examples include Barth and Noel 1972; Burkey, 1978; Marden and Meyer, 1978; Schermerhorn, 1970) or alternatively focused on cycles of relations through which such encounters between societies presumably pass (for example, Berry 1997; Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1999, Askegaard et al., 2005).

According to this approach, culture is the ‘collective programming of the mind’ (Hofsted, 1991) or ‘human made environment’ that shapes human behaviour (Triandis, 1993). Culture affects individual behaviour in two ways: first it shapes their understanding of the world surrounding them. According to McCracken (1986) these structures: ‘determine how the phenomena will be apprehended and assimilated’ (p.16), and secondly, social structures determine individual behaviour; culture is perceived as the blueprint of human activity (Luna and Gupta, 2001). Individual’s identity is therefore tied up with her/his membership of a particular social category such as class, a specific occupational grouping, regional origins, nationality, and so on.
Similarly to Elliott (1997) I would like to evaluate in this thesis some of the key issues raised by postmodern and post structuralist accounts of marketing. In particular I would like to follow Elliott’s observation that ‘consumption can be conceptualised from cultural, social, and psychological perspectives as being a prime site for the negotiation of conflicting themes of freedom and control’ (p.285). I would like to develop further Elliott’s claim (1997, p. 285) that: ‘the consumer is far from being a passive victim but is an active agent in the construction of meaning’.

2.1 Value consensus - the glue of society

The first step in understanding this conversation in marketing is to learn the functionalist view on how social and cultural structures function. According to this view, societies have certain basic needs or requirements that must be met if they are to survive. These requirements are sometimes known as ‘functional prerequisites’ (Parsons, 1951). Following this understanding, if a social system is to survive, its various parts need some degree of fit and compatibility. Thus the functional prerequisites of society involve at least a minimal degree of integration between the different cultural groups. Parsons (1951) argues that members of society base this integration largely on value consensus - that is, on agreement about common values.

Parsons claims that the Hobbesian picture of people as individuals who pursue personal ends, restrained only by a sovereign power, fails to provide an adequate explanation for social order. He has claimed that only an agreed set of values provides a basis for order in society. Value consensus forms a fundamental integrating principle in society. If members of society are committed to the same values, they will share a common identity, which provides a basis for unity and cooperation (Andersen and Taylor, 2006).

Having attributed such importance to value consensus, many scholars within this school of thought then focus on the question on how this consensus is maintained. Parsons (1937) suggests the centrality of a socialisation process for the value consensus maintenance. He says: ‘the main task of sociology is to examine the
institutionalisation of pattern of value orientation in the social system’ (p.138). The sociologist Peter Berger (1963) has pointed out that not only do people live in society, but society also lives in people. Socialisation is, therefore, a mode of social control. Because socialised people conform to cultural expectations, socialisation gives society a certain degree of predictability, which establishes patterns that become the basis of social order. Although few people match the cultural ideal exactly, most of us fit comfortably within society’s expectations. This description helps us to understand the approach of marketing to consumers’ socialisation.

2.2 Marketing as ‘socialisation agent’

The structuralist approach to marketing explains that marketing strategy takes the effective images, ideas and concepts in society and re-signifies them in the context of their brands in order to fit to a consumption pattern that has the best potential to enlarge and extend the market. Such products linked to desirable values, people and life styles are represented in a favourable light making them attractive and desirable for greater numbers of consuming households. According to this view brands provide instruction on how to perform collective life. The marketers offer consumers a social ‘code of behaviour’ that would help them to blend in.

McCracken (1988) explains that the social meaning products convey come from the cultural environment, moving into goods via the fashion system, word of mouth, reference groups, subcultural groups, celebrities, and the media. The individual attaches meanings to a brand through advertising because advertisements offer the general cultural symbols needed to provide meaning. Similarly, reference group usage of a brand provides meaning via the associations consumers hold regarding that group (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). At the next stage, meaning moves from goods to consumers, as consumers construct themselves through their brand choices based on congruency between brand image and self-image. Thus, ‘the meaning and value of a brand is not just its ability to express the self, but also its role in helping consumers create and build their self-identities’ (McCracken, 1989 p.312).
Reference groups have an important role in this acculturation process. Consumers use others as a source of information and evaluation of their beliefs about the world, particularly others who share beliefs and are similar on relevant dimensions. Therefore, if a reference group becomes associated with a particular brand, a consumer may appropriate this brand meaning as they construct their self-identities. Conversely, consumers may avoid associations derived from groups to which they do not belong (Escalas and Bettman 2005). For example, Escalas and Bettman (2005) found that Hispanic and Asian consumers report stronger self-brand connections for brands with images that are consistent with the image of an in-group compared to brands with images that are not consistent with one.

Having established the importance of concepts such as functional prerequisites, value consensus, socialisation, assimilation, and the understanding of the pressure to blend in and belong we can turn our attention to the role of marketing as an institution within this social system. Firat and Dholakia (2005, p.60) claim that in modern times ‘marketing process is a leading force in the signification and representation of values, perceived needs, and preferences to the consuming masses’. This description is in line with Adorno and Horkheimer, (2002 p. 12) who say that segmentation is about ‘classifying, organising and labelling consumers’. In the same line, Holt (2003) claims that marketing of modernity holds cultural authority as an important source of socialisation. Marketers are portrayed as ‘cultural engineers’, organising how people think and feel through branded commercial products through a system of commercial organisations that use marketing techniques to seduce consumers to participate in a system of commodified meaning embedded in brands.

The 20th century saw the growing domination of the market within western discourse in society. Carrier (1997) suggests that we can think of market discourse as a modern ‘lingua franca’, a public language adopted as a means of communication between different groups and strata in society. In later stages of modernity, the language of the market became the dominant lingua franca through which the social order is discussed and understood. Far from being a neutral medium of
communication, the language of the market is ideologically charged, not only motivating action and legitimising institutions but also defining reality. Lopez (2003) explains: ‘Social relations do not become like market relations between buyers and sellers, they are market relations. A smile is transformed into a metaphor’ (p.30).

2.3 Structural marketing and the concept of segmentation

As the self is embedded in social practices, one’s self-identity must be validated through social interaction. Symbolic meanings, then, are used to construct, maintain and express these self-identities (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). These symbolic values and meanings are important to consumers because they help them to categorise themselves in society, and they can even communicate cultural meaning of social positions such as social status, gender, age, traditions and group identity (Belk, 1988). Grant McCracken (1986) emphasises the importance of categorising the market into cultural categories. He says: ‘These categories will determine how this world will be segmented into discrete, intelligible parcels and how these parcels will be organised into a larger coherent system’ (p.36). It is clear that traditional marketing views the individual consumer as part of the well-organised structure of society.

In the same line, Douglas (1996, p.97) explains: ‘goods are needed for making visible and stable the categories of culture. It is standard ethnographic practice to assume that all material possessions carry social meanings and to concentrate a main part of cultural analysis upon their use as communications’. As communicators, goods are primarily ‘markers’ that indicate social relationships and classification. Through the public meanings attached to goods and their public uses, consumption organises social order by making visible social divisions, categories, ranks and so on. Social meaning is generally shifting and unstable; consumption rituals as conventions of use ‘tie these meanings down and set up visible public definitions’ (Douglas, 1996, p.97).
Because goods mark out social categories they can be used to discriminate ranks and values, identities and memberships. Douglas (1996, p.76) explains the influence of this social process on consumption: ‘Indeed, the more numerous the discriminated ranks, the more varieties of food will be needed’. In marketing this discussion leads to the development of differentiation strategies. The structural discussion was the philosophical basis for the development of segmentation and targeting strategies.

Traditional marketing speaks of signifying practices that generate meaning as an outcome of structures or predictable regularities that lie outside of any given person. As such, this view is anti-humanist in its decentring of human agents from the heart of this analysis. Instead these scholars favour structural discussion in which phenomena have meaning in relation to other phenomena within a systematic structure of which no particular person is the source of meaning.

Traditional marketing regards social structures, such as national cultures (for example Mexican in Penaloza, 1994; Haitian in Oswald, 1998; Greenlandic in Askegaard et al. 2004), ethnic cultures (for example South Asians in Jamal, 2000; or Lindridge, 2001) and religious cultures (for example Usunier, 2005), as finished objects. Their features have been clarified through long historical processes and they are thought now to influence and shape the actions and thoughts of all their members. In this view, culture is something one has and is a member of, rather than something one makes or reshapes through constantly renewed activity. This structuralist approach helps marketers to make common-sense predictions of how these others might think and what they might do next.

2.4 From Essentialism to a discursive understanding

In this section I would like to review an alternative explanation to the structuralist marketing that claims that in postmodern Britain, consumers can have multiple reference groups and they now encounter multidimensional cultural realities. This view contests the claim that if someone is a member of a specific cultural category s/he will have a clearly unified reference group to relate to. This postmodern view
goes further and explains that in the lack of clear point of reference consumers surrender to the culture of consumption; they exchange a consistent and coherent self-identity for a shifting cultural identity based on lifestyle choices. From this point of view, the identity of the consumer is formed by the way they speak about themselves and identify with the signs and symbols that constitute the lifestyle they choose. This new reality fundamentally challenges the essentialist basis on which modern marketing has developed.

Indeed, identity formation involves setting boundaries. These boundaries locate the parameters of difference and sameness. Those with whom we share an identity are marked out as the same, in contrast to those who are different. Sameness is featured by the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ and ‘our’ pronouns which draw in those with whom the identity is shared while excluding those who are characterised as ‘others’ (Woodward 2002). However, securing identity includes managing multiple different selves thus identity boundaries are not as secure as might at first be thought.

An interesting reference can be found in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche (1878) who says:

In the age of comparison, the less that people are tied by custom, the greater grows the inner movement of their motivations, the greater, accordingly, the outward unrest, the intermingling of people, the polyphony of intentions. Who, nowadays, is still subject to any strict compulsion to tie himself or his offspring to one particular place? Who, indeed, is subject to any strict compulsion at all? (cited in Bauman, 1999, p. 81)

Nietzsche envisioned living people as active negotiators of culture and cultural differences. What he was reacting to was, most probably, the urbanisation of the west, in which the expanding cities attracted many new groups, each with their own “folk cultures”. Far from taking the melting pot approach, Nietzsche predicted a period of cross-cultural comparisons that, if all went well, would then give way to a new understanding of culture. Today’s multiculturalism is no longer concerned with the ‘folk cultures’ of white peasants flocking to cities run by other white people. In our days the challenge, both political and theoretical, is about three other concerns.
The points of the multicultural triangle are about nationality as culture, ethnicity as culture and religion as culture. All of these ‘categories’ crumble as soon as one scratches the surface: nationality as culture is neither post-ethnic nor post-religious; ethnicity as culture is based on culturally fragmented commitment, not on mere genes; and religion as culture is not a matter of sacred rule books but of contextual bearing (Bauman, 1999).

Until now, the more influential theory was the essentialist view, which regards national cultures, ethnic cultures and religious cultures as finished objects. Their features have been worked out through long historical processes, and they are thought now to influence and even shape the actions and thoughts of all their so-called members. In this view, culture is something one has and is a member of, rather than something one makes or reshapes through constant renewing activity. This essentialist approach helps marketers to make common sense predictions of how consumers might think and what they might do next. British will act like British, South Asians like South Asians, Muslims like Muslims and so on. One need not ask who they are if one knows what they are. But, how can one predict the opinions of anyone with cross-cutting or multidimensional identity? Will a British-Indian Hindu behave and think like a Briton, like an Asian or like a Hindu? And what of the atheist British-born Pakistani, who like other children from different ethnic minorities, attends a Roman Catholic school?

I would like to claim that the essentialist view of culture offers limited help for any kind of analysis. It disregards the fact that we are all members of more than one cultural category. We participate in the maintenance, not to mention the remaking, of a national culture, or an ethnic culture or maybe a religious one, and we probably participate in the culture associated with a region or a city, a particular language community, and a social category such as student or worker, feminist, motor biker or surfer and many more social groups based on different life styles. In urbanised societies different cultural circles do not run parallel to each other. Rather they cut across one another to form continuously changing patterns of what may be called “cross-cutting cleavages” (Bauman, 1996, p.56).
2.5 Signs and common meanings

Another way to evaluate the structural view of marketing is to understand Saussure's claim that language is the instrument, which enables human beings to achieve a rational comprehension of the world in which they live. Saussure saw our understanding of reality as depending essentially upon our social use of verbal signs, which constitute the language we use. Saussure made a distinction between signifier and signified (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The sign is the whole resulting from the association of the signifier and signified and the relationship between these two is referred to as signification. The signifier is the sign, which conveys meaning like a word or a sound; it is the form a sign takes. The signified is the concept it represents, the mental image agreed by the members of society (Chandler, 2007).

Saussure explains that signs get their meaning in reciprocal determination with other signs inside language; therefore, in language there are only differences. This difference can help us to understand the idea of shared meanings. He explains:

> Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system ... A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass thought engenders a system of values. (Saussure, 1916, pp. 122-113)

In contrast to Saussure, Derrida (1982) claims that language is not a mirror that reflects an independent object world (reality). He understands meaning not as a fixed, eternal thing. In this sense, identity is not an inner essence of a person to which words refer to but the regulated way of ‘speaking’ about persons. For Derrida identities are a discursive construction underpinned by language made of signs with no essences and, therefore, he claims, for the non-existence of essential identities. That is, signs do not ‘picture’ the world but constitute it for us.
For Derrida (1982, p.17) there is no original meaning outside of the signs, therefore, ‘from the moment that there is meaning there is nothing but signs’. Because we think only in signs there is no original (“real”) meaning circulating outside of our representation. There is no primary source of meaning and no self-present transparent meaning that can fix the relation between signifiers and signified. Therefore, in contradiction to McCracken’s ‘meaning transfer’ concept (1986), the meanings of objects and actions are never structured by a single abstract semiotic system but by multiple and overlapping resources, from which the individual selects, combines and juxtaposes. Consequently, the meaning of a particular cultural object for a particular individual in a particular context is produced typically through negotiation between available discourses. This leads Holt (1997, p.329) to note that ‘the meaning of any particular object is inherently unstable and contingent since it is dependent on which meaningful linkages are made’.

For Derrida, since meaning is generated through the play of signifiers not by reference to an independent object world, it can never be fixed. Words carry multiple meanings, including the echoes or traces of other meanings from other related words in other contexts. Language is non-representational and meaning is inherently unstable so that it constantly slides away. Thus, ‘difference’, the key issue in Derrida’s conversation with Saussure, means that the production of meaning in the process of signification is continually differentiated and supplemented. Similarly, Jameson (1991) explains that the signified, or the meaning, is normally produced by the interrelationship of material signs. He explains that in postmodern culture the relationships between signifiers are lessening and losing significance; they are, instead, transformed to mere images. Consequently a single brand is capable of representing multiple images, as signified by culture and by marketing efforts.

Foucault (1981) sees a relationship between power and knowledge as the key to understanding how society is shaped. Power/knowledge has no fixed form but constantly changes in the course of interaction. Power is not to be found in social structures but is intimately linked to the way people talk about things and create
particular discourses in a particular situation. This idea of discourse replacing structure is supported by Jordan and Weedon (1994) who argue that individuals do not have a unique, fixed or coherent idea of whom they are or a single sense of identity. Instead, their identity is shaped through involvement in particular discourses. From this point of view, ethnicity is formed by the way we speak about group identities and identify with the signs and symbols that constitute ethnicity. This idea can find support in the philosophical work of Wittgenstein, Barth, Lyotard, and many others.

According to this view a person occupies various culturally based sites of meaning, as family members, as occupationally and economically and regionally defined, as gendered and of sexual orientation, as members of clubs or clients of psychotherapy or presidents of their school parents' organisation, and on and on. Every site is made of multiple and sometimes contradictory configurations of the self, different language uses, different social practices, and so forth. Every individual, including one who comes from an ethnic minority, has multiple pools of common meanings and symbols and practices which they share variously with many circles in their lives in the immediate and the global environment.

2.6 Life styles replace structural identity

This discussion has significant implications for the understanding of segmentation. There is a widespread perception that we live through a period of radical change in our social orders. Old and trusted maps of meaning are felt to be giving way to the new uncertainties of a global disorder. As Kobna Mercer (1992, p.19) argues: ‘in political terms identities are in crisis because traditional structures of membership and belonging inscribed in relations of class, party, and nation state have been called into question’.

Similarly, Dufour (2003) suggests that all the ‘grand references’ of the past are still available for use nowadays, but none of them has enough authority above the others ‘to impose itself on reference seekers’ (cited in Bauman, 2005, p.31). Bauman (2005) explains:
Confused and lost among many competitive claims to authority, with no single voice sufficiently loud or audible for long enough to stand out from the cacophony and provide a leading motif, residents of a liquid modern world cannot find, however earnestly they try, a ‘credible collective enunciator’ (one that [...] secures for us faced with chaos, a certain permanence - of origins, purpose and order’). They have to settle instead for notoriously unreliable substitutes. (Bauman, 2005, p.31)

Many writers claim that lifestyles fill this void of dominant structure in the life of contemporary consumers. For example Giddens (1992, p.36) says:

Where large areas of a person’s life are no longer set by pre-existing patterns and habits, the individual is continually obliged to negotiate life style options. Moreover - and this crucial - such choices are not just ‘external’ or marginal aspects of the individual’s attitude, but define who the individual is. In other words, lifestyle choices are constitutive of a reflective self.

Jamal (2003, p.1601) links this discussion to the discussion on ethnic identity and claims: ‘In such fragmented social reality, ethnicity has become a ‘bricolage’, an image, a life style and a way of reacting to the social change in society’.

However even lifestyle cannot offer a comprehensive solution. Holt (1997) explains that even lifestyles are not able to serve as a stable point of reference since life styles can change over time and across societies through consumption practices. People often experiment with new life styles as they emerge but even if they do not, existing life styles are constantly evolving because their meanings are constructed by relational differences with an ever-changing set of alternatives.

2.7 Ethnicity, lifestyle and simulation

In this section I would like to link this post structuralist discussion to ethnicity. Bouchet (1994) and Thompson (1995) suggest that ethnicity in Postmodern Europe is more bricolage than ever. They claim that ethnicity is not the continuation or the importation of the already existing cultural system, but rather the creation of a lifestyle. Bouchet attempts to explain the increasing tension surrounding the subject of religiosity between Muslims and the French in France and suggests that in fact this new religiosity has not much in common with the old one. He explains that in
modern times people did not choose their religion, they were born into it. Current religiosity, according to Bouchet (1995), has much more in common with today’s malls than with yesterday’s churches or mosques.

Something similar is said by Bouchet (1995, p.84) about ethnicity when he explains that we should not view ethnicity as the ‘transportation of a community coming from outside that keeps its identity, its ritual, its religion, its cuisine, its clothing, its language. It is not the recollection of past tradition or events that carried through modern times’. It is the building of new and often individual identities on the basis of elements for a diversity of cultural representations and practices. Similarly, Oliver Roy says:

Ethnicity is an invention by the actors themselves of a new identity perceived and claimed in terms of exclusion through the creation of a code made up of borrowing from modernity of the country of reception as well as from the fantasized past of a defunct community, a code formed more from the salience of the elders than from their speeches. (Roy, 1991, p.41)

Roy and Volk (2007) pointed out that in the Arab communities of France, Arabic is not the primary language and the Islamic religion is not really practised but is used only on a symbolic level. Camilleri and Falk (1993, p.91) describes young people descended from immigrants who ‘continued to assert their affiliation to the group of Magrebians (North Africans) whose traditional values they almost totally rejected, whilst they adopted the culture of the French to whose society they refused to affiliate’. Bourn (2008, p.16) stressed that what is central is that ‘young people complete what the preceding generations undertook; the individualisation process’. From her point of view, the real question is; how will the generations be influenced by the ‘kaleidoscopic media construct [of] their personal identities and social groups?’.
Bouchet (1995) concludes that social categories are not a sufficient basis for social analysis. He disagrees with Breton and Pinard (1960, p.474) who claim that: ‘a person does not belong to an ethnic category by choice. He/she is born into it and become[s] related to it through emotional and symbolic ties’. Instead, Bouchet (1995, p.73) argues that the deterministic and objective conception of ethnicity is becoming ‘somewhat obsolete’. Bouchet emphasises choice and says: ‘people provide themselves with ethnic identity by creative cocktail making, the ingredients of which are suggested by the diversity of images they confront in postmodern society’ (Bouchet, 1995, p.74).

Bouchet differentiates between traditional ethnic groups who kept their traditions and postmodern ethnic groups who keep up with their styles. They are less interested in their roots than in the way they see themselves. They do not so much refer to their ancestors as to the eyes of their contemporaries. The artistic director of Asian theatre Jetinder Verma supports this view when he comments that he prefers to define his Asian origins as ‘routs’ rather than as ‘roots’ (Woodward, 2002). This perception acknowledges the importance of origin or home (India in his case) but also adopts a more dynamic approach to ethnic identity that emphasises adaptation. In this account identity is ‘more about becoming as being’ (Woodward, 2002).

Gardner and Shukur (1994, p. 161) quote a young British-Bangladeshi rap singer who describes her identity: “I rap in Bengali and English, I rap on everything from love to politics, I’ve always been into rapping … it was rebellious, the lyrics were sensational. I could relate to that, I could identify with it. Like living in the ghetto and that … it’s from the heart. It’s I’m Bengali, I’m Asian, I’m a woman, and I’m living here”. The ability to make greater choices when they construct identity means that people who live in close proximity to each other and even belong to the same ethnic group can have quite different identities. The nature of interpersonal relationships is completely different from interpersonal relationships of the past (Bauman, 2004).
Consumer society stratifies its members on the basis of their skills to operate sign symbols and consumption-based meanings. The answer to the question of our identity is no longer, a ‘doctor’, an ‘accountant’, an ‘owner of a corner shop’ or a ‘nice middle-class boy’ but is based on our ability to display the most up to date signifiers of status and style. Featherstone (1991, p.84) suggests that postmodern consumers ‘make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle’.

Thus, ethnic identity, or self-identity, is mainly the ensemble of commodity signs, which the ethnic individual consumes, or ‘the sum of labels and logos’ (Featherstone, 1991). The implication is that individuals from an ethnic minority are under less pressure to be ‘authentic’. S/he is not expected to be authentically Asian, Afro-Caribbean or any other identity the white majority attaches to one of its subcultures. No one can define anymore what the authentic style is. Instead individuals are expected to find the ‘right style’ that will reflect the integration of different styles that makes them what they are. This style should keep pace with changing fashions.

2.8 Fluid ‘we’ and consumption

The postmodern individual finds it hard to act on the foundation of stable and fixed truths. No longer can one securely determine what it is to be a specific kind of person - male or female, black or white or even a person at all. Jameson (1999) explains in his book ‘The Death of The Subject’: ‘As the category of the individual person fades from view, consciousness of social construction becomes crucial. We realize increasingly that our “personal essence” (real feelings, deep beliefs) does not determine who and what we are’ (Jameson, 1999, p.73).
Bauman (2004, p.57) explains:

As an act of personal emancipation and self-assertion individuality seems to be burdened with an inborn aporia, an insoluble contradiction. It needs society as simultaneously its cradle and its destination... individuality is a task set for its members by the society of individuals - set as an individual task, to be individually performed, by individuals using their individual resources.

He explains that ‘One way to deal with this situation is to surrender to the culture of consumption - to exchange a consistent self-identity for shifting cultural identity based on our lifestyle choices. Thus, ‘coasting through the ebb-and-flow of social change, we yield an independent ‘I’ for an ever changing ‘we’ (Bauman, 2004, p.57).

This fluidity of ‘we’ means that consumers can have multiple reference groups instead of one. All consumers now encounter multidimensional culture realities. If someone is from a French culture, Jewish culture, Asian culture or Afro-Caribbean culture this does not mean s/he will have a clear unified reference group to relate to. None of these cultures are as homogeneous as they used to be and no one can have membership of one cultural category alone.

2.9 The role of marketing in the new reality

Brands have an important role in these circumstances as they are able to help consumers achieve goals which are motivated by the self. For example, brands can be used to meet self-expression needs, publicly or privately. They can serve as tools for social integration or connecting us to the past. They may act as symbols of personal accomplishment, provide self-esteem, allow one to differentiate oneself and express individuality, and help people through life transitions (Holt, 2002).

Holt (2002) suggests that brands are expected to be cultural resources. Consumers will look for brands to contribute directly to their identity projects. This process will not use ‘cultural engineering’ methods but provide original and relevant cultural materials upon which the consumer will work. Brands will become another form of expressive art, no different in principle than films or television programs or rock
bands. He says: ‘Brands that create worlds that strike consumers’ imaginations, that inspire and provoke and stimulate, that help them interpret the world that surround them, will earn kudos and profits’ (Holt, 2002, p.126).

The role of marketing, therefore, will be to offer inspiration for this creative process. Ethnic discourse will find its expression verbally and behaviourally in the commercial market (Firat et al., 2005). Firat claims that the only way to express ethnic individuality is through marketable forms. He says: ‘We end up organising our images and discourses of individuality and diversity based on the media representations of those elements that sell’ (Firat et al, 2005, p.112). He gives as an example the black American identity in the USA and says that young black Americans perceive themselves and are perceived by others based on images of black athletic stars (such as Michael Jordan) selling sports shoes or as rap artists.

In this work I support the claim that the individual in consumer culture can increase their choice of identities and negotiate their position in society by creative use of their life styles and consumptions (Woodward, 2002). By their preferences for a particular life style or brand they can distinguish themselves from others in the wider society and their own community at the same time.

In his book ‘consumer society’, Jean Baudrillard (1998) claims that the use of brands in modernity is nothing but a means to assign the individual a place in the economic order. Brands wish to increase the size of the market by individualisation of the market. They attract consumers by giving them the freedom of choices. This freedom to choose causes the consumer to participate in a cultural system. However, Baudrillard explains that contemporary social reality is not the ‘social order’ in the modernist meaning. Postmodern society is a society where everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold and where alienation is total. This a society of people who live in the "hyperreality" of simulations in which images, spectacles, and the play of signs replace the concepts of production and class conflict (key concepts of classic economy) as key constituents of contemporary societies. In such society the old social categories lose their relevance.
The market is geared to helping these individuals that struggle to construct, preserve and refresh their individuality. It might have been easy to manifest one’s uniqueness in a society of stiff patterns and monotonous routines, but it cannot be easy in a society which obliges each and all of its members to be unique. Bauman says: ‘conformity, once accused of stifling human individuality, is proclaimed to be the individual’s best friend’ (Bauman, 2005, p.36).

To make it clear, my research does not attempt to reduce social aggregates to their individual components but to make a claim that individuals are more than their membership and participation in collectivities. Collectivities are the product of their individual members; therefore, academic attention to individual’s consciousness of their memberships is an appropriate way to understand the collectivity, rather than seeing it as constituted by an abstracted and compelling logic. The rest of this thesis will describe the journey I have taken to learn about this process.

2.10 Consumer Culture Theory: a critique

The primary aim of my research is to reject Smith’s (1956) claim that heterogeneous markets can be made of a number of smaller homogeneous markets. Smith argues that making an offer that satisfies a particularly precise need in a market will unite a group of consumers, who are striving to satisfy this need, around that particular offer. This union then creates a homogeneous segment.

The main problem with Smith’s perspective is that it describes a very rational consumer who is able to balance costs against benefits to arrive at an action that maximizes personal advantage. The famous economist Richard Posner (1998) criticizes this rational view and claims it is too simplistic having no correspondence with the real world of consumers. He says: ‘He [the rational consumer- o,d] is a compound of rational and irrational capacities and impulses. He might do anything ... we have neither a causal account of behavioural man nor a model of his decisional structure’ (p.1637). The individual is assumed to choose the best action according to the offers available in an unchanging and stable market. However, anti-essentialist
economists reject the very possibility of the existence of a well-defined ‘market’, let alone a ‘stable market’ (for example, Muniesa, Millo & Callon, 2007).

The 1980s saw the introduction of an alternative answer to the economic perspective of homogeneous groups in the market. Instead of Smith’s proposition of added value offers, the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) group argued that shared cultural meanings can be a better basis for the creation of homogeneous segments. The CCT group claimed that consumers’ understanding of perceived benefits of a product is based on their perception of the meanings that are attached to the products or brands (for example, Sherry and Belk 2007). These meanings are determined by a system of cultural values and these values influence consumers’ choice. Elliott (1997) emphasises the social role of consumption and explains that the consumption of symbolic meanings provides the individual with the opportunity to construct, maintain and communicate identity and social meanings.

Scholars such as McCracken (1986) explain that consumers are organized within cultural structures and these structures ‘determine how the world will be apprehended and assimilated’ (p.16). Moisander and Pesonen (2002) add that belonging to consumption communities (eco-communards in their research, p.340) helps the consumer to negotiate his/her place in the wider community and resist dominant discourses.

My research offers an alternative view to this description of market reality. I join the post-structuralist writers such as Firat et al. (1997) who claim that in current cultural and social reality the boundaries between social groups are being eroded. Cultural categories no longer run in parallel but cut across one another and change all the time. There is no primary source of meaning that can fix the relation between the signifiers and the signified in consumers’ language. My claim is that common cultural forms do not necessarily generate common meanings. Instead, I argue that the meaning of a particular cultural object for a particular individual in a particular context is produced through negotiation between available discourses rather than determined by a single semiotic system. Therefore, our focus should be on this negotiation process rather than the understanding of the semiotic system.
My problem with McCracken (1986) and Moisander’s (2002) conceptualization of lifestyle and consumption communities as a source of common meaning and a tool for negotiating position in society is that it fails to recognize the fluidity of the concept of social category. The idea of societies, or cultures, as being closed social and symbolic systems has been severely criticised in recent years. It has been stressed repeatedly that no society is entirely isolated, that cultural boundaries are not absolute, and that webs of communication and exchange tie societies together everywhere.

Cultures, or systems of signification and symbolisation, are tied together in increasingly complex ways (Wolf, 1982; Featherstone, 1990). Consequently Ardener (1989) claims that social studies are witnessing what he calls ‘parameter collapse’. According to this view the concepts of "cultures" and "societies" as our central units of investigation increasingly seem out-dated as regulative ideas, since they indicate a stability and boundedness in social systems that are unwarranted. Wallerstein, (1991) supports this claim.

In order to take my criticism of the CCT to a more specific discussion, I will focus on their description of ethnic minorities as acculturating individuals that hold hyphenated identity. Writers such as Penaloza (1994), Oswald (1999), Askegaard et al. (2005) describe ethnic minorities as caught between contradictory ways of living (for example: Danish and Greenlandic; American and Haitians or Americans and Mexicans). According to this view ethnic minorities are affected by two conflicting sets of socialisation agents: host society and community of ethnic origins.

My claim is that it is misleading to assume that individuals are positioned in such a defined way between two sets of cultures (British and South Asian in my research). We are unwise to treat these categories as independent and autonomous. The cultural identity of the participants is not a position between two clearly bounded categories but a continually shifting set of subject positions. The points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating.
CCT scholars such as Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) accept this multiplicity but claim that narrative has a unifying role. They explain that the conceptions people have about themselves are disjointed until, and unless, they are located within a story. CCT writers (such as: Shankar, Elliott and Goulding, 2001; Arnould and Price, 1993; Deighton, 1992; O’Guinn and Belk, 1989) explain that because of this unifying role, narratives are a fundamental way by which consumers structure and make sense of their lives.

My problem with this conceptualisation of narrative identity is that it fails to recognise that there are many narratives that can be told, even of the same self. None of them can gain dominancy over the other narratives. Furthermore, in line with Bakhtin’s (1984) theory, the individual can position her/himself as different characters within the same story. The final result of the self-narrative is not a unified self, on the contrary, the final result and purpose of the story is to enable multiple stories of the self and to enable the individual free movement between narratives.

CCT research (for example Belk et al. 2003; Penaloza, 2001; Elliott and Elliott, 2003) has been driven by the attempt to identify the meaning and interpretations woven into consumption practices. CCT researchers thus attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the semiotic world of the participants. The problem with this view is that it assumes a shared and stable consumer experience that needs to be discovered. I claim that the research approach should not be seen as trying to get the underlying discourse about ‘identity’ but rather to examine how different discourses are managed in the lives of consumers.

Another criticism of the CCT perspective is that it places the researcher in the centre of the research methodology when identifying meaning and interpreting consumer experiences. Sherry (1991) emphasises this by claiming that the researcher needs to be treated as the research instrument itself due to the importance of his/her role in the observation, selection, coordination, and interpretation of data. It is clear that the CCT research gives the researcher too much authority (what Barth (1967) calls ‘interpretive tyranny’) to write the story of the participant. This interpretive power denies the ‘individual’ claim for ‘subjecthood’. To change this power imbalance
between the researcher and the participant, I prefer to share the power of interpretation with my participants. Moreover, I argue that our challenge is to develop a research methodology that enables us to capture the movement of the individual between discourses or narratives and to be aware of the temporality in this positioning within a discourse.

If my anti-essentialist argument is correct, it will be futile to try to design a research methodology that aims to find consistent, centred, or stable self-images of current consumers, let alone categorise them. Rather, we should find a way that will explore the multimodality of the life experiences of consumers.
Chapter Three - Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This thesis makes a claim that the marketing concept and segmentation strategy is essentialist because it assumes that every consumer (or group of consumers) can be identified by fixed set of attributes (e.g. age, gender, race, social economic class, lifestyle, type of personality etc.). The main assumption is that the chosen attribute can be a sufficient basis for segmentation as it is necessary for the individual’s identity and function (Cartwright, 1968). I argue here that common forms do not necessarily generate common meanings (Cohen, 1984). Consequently, the description and explanation of individuals in terms of their group or membership in a category must be misleading. Individuals and society are too complex and too subtle to be reconciled satisfactorily in such a mechanical fashion.

The problem with the essentialist view of marketing is that it assumes that there is a shared and stable consumer experience that necessarily leads to a common meaning of brands and a similar decision-making process. Alternatively my research follows writers such as Stuart Hall (1996) who claim that consumer identity is not a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being but a process of becoming. Self-identity is not an essence but a continually shifting set of subject positions; their meaning is never finished or completed. Consequently, segmentation strategies that try to constrain consumers to a single, consistent, stable way of behaving are 'likely to lead to marketing failure' (Firat et al., 1997, p.197).

If this anti-essentialist argument is correct, it will be rather futile to try to design a research methodology that aims to find consistent, centred, or stable self-images of current consumers let alone categorise them on the basis of this stable self-perception. Rather, we should find a way that will explore the several self-images that a single consumer may subscribe to at different times under different circumstances. Therefore, my research purpose will be to understand how social reality is constructed and how individual consumers take part in social order using
every day discursive practices within an existing cultural and institutional structure. I will try to understand how particular consumers in particular contexts make use of the available cultural categories and discourses (e.g. national, local, ethnic community, global culture, gender, religion. popular culture, etc.), rationalities and representations to make sense of their lives.

To investigate these questions I would like to focus my primary research on one cultural category: second and third generation British South Asians. There are many reasons for my choice to focus my research on this particular group. However, I take inspiration from Rick Dolphijn who explains in his book ‘Foodscapes: Towards a Deleuzian Ethics of Consumption’ (2004) why he chose to focus his research on a specific selection of four cities:

It is difficult to say why I picked these particular cities. I can give you ten reasons why I preferred them, but it is easy to come up with ten other arguments why I should have gone elsewhere. I can however, share some of my considerations with you: I was looking for four cities that had strong though very different tastes in food. Cities that were not supposed to ‘represent’ a particular cuisine, but that had vivid ideas on how to prepare a meal and how to enjoy it...I was interested in cities under construction that found themselves in a constant stage of redevelopment...the following stories on consumption, therefore, never pretend to uncover their so-called ‘essence’. (Dolphijn, 2004, p.7)

Similarly to Rick Dolphijn I can give ten different reasons why I prefer to focus my primary research on this group but I would like to share with the reader my main considerations. I was looking for a group of consumers who are required to negotiate with multiple discourses — local, global, past, present, future, western, eastern, religious, national, popular culture and more — and with many social and cultural categories: - British society, South Asian community, country of origin, religion, professional identity and others at the same time. According to Ali (2010), second and third generation British South Asian families experience these multiple negotiations in much more intensity than others.
Secondly, the marketing literature takes an essentialist view when analysing this group. This literature treats ethnic minority consumers as acculturating individuals that hold a hyphenated identity (for example, Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1998; Askegaard, 2005 and more generally Bhatia, 2002). According to this view, second generation British South Asians have to balance pressures from two sides of the hyphen of their identity: South Asian and the wider British / Western society (Bhatia 2002). Writers such as Askegaard et al. (2005) Oswald (1998) and Penaloza (1994) describe the ethnic minorities in their research as being caught between contradictory or polarised categories; family and community demands on the one hand and the expectations of the host culture on the other. The early acculturation models in marketing typically examined issues like the impact of strength of ethnic identification with the host or immigrant culture (i.e. varying degrees of acculturation) on consumption patterns (for example Stayman and Deshpande (1989); Hirschman, 1981; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983).

Other models in marketing, such as Thompson (1974), focus on possible outcomes of the acculturation process. Thompson suggests two potential responses to these pressures; one is the assimilated reaction where an individual behaves as part of the host society, while the other is the group rejection where behaviour remains in line with the culture of origin. Askegaard et al. (2005) describe 'post-assimilationist' models (for example: Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1999; Askegaard et al., 2005) that focus on the outcomes of the acculturation process.

In my research, I take inspiration from Hall (1996) and investigate ethnicity in its de-totalised, or deconstructed forms, recognising ethnicity as a concept that cannot be thought of in the ‘old way’ as representing essential, discrete differences between groups. Ethnicity and race are conceptualised here as socially constructed, relational and culturally located (Brah, 1996; Lewis, 2000). That is, ethnicity and race have been seen as variegated social categories that are in a constant state of production and negotiation with other forms of difference the same individual subscribes to, and within specific social, historical and interactional arenas, whilst also serving to constitute these arenas.
Therefore my main research question will be:

How do individuals, born and living in Great Britain, to families with South Asian origins perceive and describe their self-identity or identities?

This question leads to the following sub-questions:

- To what cultural sources does the British Asian individual go to find inspiration when trying to describe or constitute self-identity?
- Do these individuals perceive the messages they get from the different cultural circles in their lives (local, ethnic, national/s, global, life styles etc.) as contradictory? If yes is there any kind of negotiation process?
- What, if any, is the place/contribution of brands, possessions and commercial messages in the process of self-identity/identities construction of these individuals?

3.1 Is anti-essentialist research on ethnicity an oxymoron?

While the aim of my research is to make an anti-essentialist claim, my methodological choice to rely upon, and the use I make of racial and ethnic categories (second and third generation of British South Asians) can itself be perceived as reproducing dominant essentialist conceptions of ethnicity and race (Smith, 2002; Stanfield, 1993). By dominant conceptions I am referring to particular formations of social meaning (discourses) that produce race and ethnicity as discrete, homogeneous, fixed categories of difference (Hall, 2000). Radhakrishnan (1996) defines this tension as the ‘treacherous bind’.

What Radhakrishnan draws attention to are two analytic movements. First, the ethical need for research projects to move outside of an abstracted mastery, and to connect with local struggles and with experiences. And second, the need for reconciliatory work between two temporalities of approach to ethnicity and race that work against the essentialism of ethnic difference in the ‘here’ and the ‘there’, and the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ whilst working for an empowerment and enfranchisement of contingent heterogeneous identities in the future (Radhakrishnan, 1996, p.71). The move is one, which seeks to outstrip systems and
processes of categorisation and, through this process, break down the possibilities of categorisation itself.

Hall (1996) claims that it is possible to use cultural categories, such as race and ethnicity, in anti-essentialist research. However, these categories should be treated as ‘under erasure’. Hall takes a deconstructive approach and explains that even if these categories are not useful analytically anymore, or in his words ‘not good to think with’ (Hall, 1996, p.2) they are yet to be replaced. For Hall, in the interval there is nothing to do but to continue to think with these ‘sell-by-date’ concepts — albeit now in their de-totalised or deconstructed forms. My research recognises ethnicity as a concept that cannot be thought of in the ‘old way’ as representing essential, discrete differences between groups, but which we still need in order to address social issues.

Ethnicity is conceptualised here as socially constructed, relational and socially located (Brah, 1996; Lewis, 2000). That is, ethnicity and race have been seen as variegated social categories that are in a constant state of production and negotiation with other forms of difference, and within specific social, historical and interactional arenas, whilst also serving to constitute these arenas.

In this regard, ethnicity and race are not positioned in isolation and ranked in opposition to other forms of differentiation. They are always seen as co-constituted and reconstituted through their interrelations with other social categories (Bhattacharyya et al., 2002; Lewis, 2000), and with regard to specific configurations of power, which both differentiate and situate the meanings of particular racial and ethnic categories in relation to others (Brah, 1996).
3.2 **Ontology and epistemology**

This description of reality inspires my ontological and epistemological stance in this research. I take anti-foundationalist view on ontology and reject the Cartesian binary perception of reality. The Cartesian Dualism and foundationalism (Bordo, 1986; Bordo, 1989) characterise reality by two opposing principles. In the case of my research it is the description of South Asian and the others through nature and science, emotions and reasons, subjectivity and objectivity and so on; the very grounds of reality are presupposed in binary terms. These opposing principles are seen as both symbiotically related and necessary to each other, and as existing in relations of super- and subordination.

The Anti-Foundationalist idea challenges the binary view, or the foundationalist explanation, of the Cartesian ontology. This idea accepts differentiation but not as oppositional or dualistic. Anti-Foundationalist idea is not concerned merely to affirm and revalue those characteristics which Cartesian ontology associates with ethnic minority; but to dispute the binary systems of thought altogether.

I would like to claim that individual experience their ‘selves’ neither as complete social constructions nor as essential or unchanging. Alternatively, ‘the self’ is the product of social construction and is conclusively social and cultural in its basis. However, although dynamic in its nature, the ‘self’ is experienced as continuous at any one point in time. However, in retrospect people can understand and describe alternative and rather different selves — ‘I was this or that’ — that once was what they were. ‘The self’ is understood here in terms of ‘mind’, a composite of thoughts, understandings and emotions that exists in complex relationship to ‘the body’. This ‘mind/body dualism’ was the focus of interest of Western societies for long time, and it conditions, although it does not predetermine, how we think of ‘our selves’. Nevertheless, this dualism is juxtaposed all the time: at one time we may define ourselves in terms of physicality, of the body and its appearance (for example dark skin); at other times we see ourselves more in terms of intellect or emotions or spirit and distance ourselves from our bodies. Cartesian dualism operates at a categorical level, and therefore, substantially oversimplifies our understanding of social reality.
and the places individuals occupy within it.

My ontological stance rejects binary and oppositional notions of ‘the self’ and its relationship to ‘the body’ and ‘mind’ and ‘emotions’. My understanding of social reality rejects a notion of the ‘other’ that the self supposedly defines itself against and in opposition to. Alternatively, I see the ‘self’ as relational and interactional; its construction is continuously changing and specific to cultural, historical and contextual circumstances. Therefore, an alternative way of understanding the dualisms of ontology — of self and other, individual and collectivity — is to treat these not as oppositions but rather as co-operative forces that construct the self, all the selves, through collective relational systems of action and interaction. Individual differences may be the result of different moral and ontological discourses that are the product of culture and social construction, not of ‘essential’ differences between social or racial groups.

Since the person is the effect of language, or discourse, that constructs ‘I’ in grammar, identity is to be understood not as a fixed, eternal thing, or an inner essence to which words refer. Language is not a mirror that reflects an independent object world (reality) and there is no original (“real”) meaning circulating outside of our representations (Derrida, 1989). Rather the speaking subject is dependent on the prior existence of discursive subject positions, the individual is required to ‘take up’ subject positions in discourse in order to make sense of the world and to appear coherent to others (Foucault, 1982).

The individual is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which she or he participates. Accordingly, the question: ‘who one is?’ is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices. The stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives are located within a number of different discourses. Consequently these stories vary dramatically in terms of language, concepts, issues and moral judgments made relevant and the subject positions within these stories. Self-identity of a particular individual in a particular context is produced typically through negotiation between available discourses.
In accordance with this view, the epistemological approach I follow in this research allows the data analyst to theorise motivations, subjective experience, and meaning. This pluralist epistemological endeavour illuminates the subjective meaning, value and contents of social identities, as well as the functions performed by rhetorical constructions for identity processes. This is consistent with the primary aim of the present research, namely, to enhance our understanding of identity construction when identity is subjectively perceived.

My epistemological approach challenges the assumption that the categories employed in everyday talk correspond to ‘objective reality’, partly because of the difficulties in actually ascertaining this (Burr, 2003). As I said before, identities and social categories are the products of particular and temporal social, cultural and historical contexts, rather than as ‘fixed’ realities. Thus, the epistemology is concerned primarily with exploring how social actors construct social ‘reality’ and the social functions performed by these constructions (Coyle, 2007).

3.3 Research Method

In my research I take a deconstructive discourse analysis approach (Macleod, at el. 2011). The main aim of my research is to deconstruct the different discourses that inspire and construct the different cultural categories in the participants’ lives, namely South Asian and British, and the construction of self-identity.

My approach emphasises the way that the forms of language that are available to us set limits upon not only what we can think and say, but also what we can do or what can be done to us. Therefore, the interest of my research is in two further issues: the practices that are implicated in particular discourses and the material conditions and social structures that form the context for these discourses. The participants’ subjectivity, their selfhood, is understood in terms of their positions within and between these discourses. The use of the term ‘discourse’ here, then, incorporates not just language but practice too.
3.3.1  Sampling

The sampling strategy of this research was based on the belief that researchers should go to the groups, which they believe they can maximise the possibilities of obtaining the data for their research question (Glaser, 1978, p.45). Danzin and Lincoln (1994) call this sampling strategy ‘purposive’ sampling; they explain: ‘many qualitative researchers employ purposive sampling, and not random sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where … the processes being studied are most likely to occur’ (1994, p.202). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), purposive sampling demands that we think critically about parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis. Mason (2002) supports this point of view and explains that the sampling process in qualitative research means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to the research question. She says: ‘sampling is concerned with constructing a sample … which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation’ (Mason, 2002, p.12). In the same line, Chenitz and Swanson (1986, p.9) state that in purposeful sampling the sample is ‘not selected from the population based on certain variables prior to the study, rather the initial sample is determined to examine the phenomenon where it is found to exist’.

Therefore the sample for the research has been selected from second and third generation British South Asians. This is similar to other discursive research such as Wetherell and Potter (1992) who have sampled participants that share the same class and ethnicity or, Frankenberg (1993) who, in his study on whiteness as a racial category, chose to interview white, female participants. My sample group (see table 3.1) was not made to represent a population as whole but particular categories within the British South Asian community: Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus from both genders. Please find below a description of the participants of this research:
Table 3.1: Profile of participants in my research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name (not real name)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Family status</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Place of living</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bally (male)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Customer call centre</td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sannita (female)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jaz (female)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nisha (female)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Internet marketing agency</td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Anu (female)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ali (male)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Raswan (male)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Mobile phone company</td>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Asim (male)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Mobile phone company</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Samera (female)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sonia (female)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Asda</td>
<td>Burton on Trent</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Anissa (female)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mirza (male)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Family business</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Summayah (female)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Advertising agency</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glaser (1978, p.37) explains that purposive sampling refers to the ‘calculated decision to sample a specific locale according to a preconceived but reasonable initial set of dimensions’ for example: race, ethnicity and religion. The researcher who uses this type of sampling cannot know in advance precisely what to sample for and where it will end. However, at the early stages of the interviewing process it became clear that following the events of 11\(^{th}\) of September 2001 (the terror attack on the twin towers) and 7\(^{th}\) of July 2005 (London bombings) and the social-political changes that followed these events, the Muslim participants experienced more intensive and complex negotiation with the cultural categories and global discourses than did the other South Asian participants. Therefore the focus of sampling (participants 6 to 13) has shifted more to British Muslim participants (similar to the
other participants they were the second and third generation of South Asian families in Great Britain).

3.3.1.1. **Snowball sampling technique**

Once the sampling categories for my research have been defined, a snowball sampling technique has been used to gain access to the participants. In this method, participants with whom initial contact has already been made, use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study (Vogt, 1999). This process is based on the assumption that a ‘bond’ or ‘link’ exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance (Berg, 1988).

In my research Ali (British Pakistani Muslim) was the starting point for the male Muslim participants, Sumayah (female British Pakistani) was the starting point for the female Muslim participants and Nisha (British-Indian Hindu) was the starting point for the Sikh participants. The link between Nisha and the Sikh participants was through the Punjabi community.

Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit “hidden populations”, that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies (Spreen, 1992). Early examples of the technique can be seen in Whyte’s Street Corner Society (1955) and Patrick’s study of a Glasgow gang (1973), which used initial contacts to generate contexts and encounters that they could use to study the gang dynamic.

While some may seek to characterise the topics for which snowball strategies have been used as being trivial or obscure, the main value of snowball sampling is as a method for obtaining respondents where they are few in number or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact. Under these circumstances, techniques of ‘chain referral’ may imbue the researcher with characteristics associated with being an insider or group member and this can aid entry to settings where
conventional approaches find it difficult to succeed. This is the case with some of my participants who feel stigmatised in British society, making them reluctant to take part in more formalised studies using traditional research methods led by a non-Asian or non-Muslim researcher. Referrals that are made by acquaintances or co-ethnic peers rather than more formal methods of approach have helped me to develop trust.

3.3.1.2 Gaining access to participants

My hesitations in recruiting participants to the study were both ethical and practical. One of the central problems was how to engage people in a study exploring the place of ethnicity discourses in their life when they do not necessarily see 'ethnicity' as a relevant description of their life experiences. I was mindful that such a discussion could lead to an imposed categorisation by the interview situation and myself, especially as someone with perceived greater discursive power. However, if I merely engaged with those who professed to be 'ethnic' an incomplete perspective would be gained.

With such considerations in mind people were therefore not brought into the research process with the individualising descriptions of being an ‘ethnic individual’ but because they were born into a South Asian family or lived in a South Asian community. As such, the labels used were applied demographically rather than individually and were ones utilised by official bodies (such as census, government policies or local councils) rather than defined by me.

Nevertheless, following an initial informal approach to potential participants in person or by telephone, I have sent them a letter (example of a letter can be found in appendix 1). The letter's wording was chosen in an attempt to set an appropriate tone for the social interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). My letter was as open as possible about the study's aims. This was important since what the prospective interviewees saw the study as being 'about' could have been central to their decision about whether or not to participate (Burman, 1994). Thus, the kinds of areas or questions I wanted to discuss with them
were outlined in an attempt to allay participants' reservations. It was stressed that it was the participant's perception of cultural influences on their lives in which I was interested and, further, that I had no preconceived ideas of "right" or "wrong" answers. The letter was explicit about the plan to record the discussions. Again, reassurance was given by promises of confidentiality and the offer to present transcripts to the participants for comment.

Regarding the ethical dimension of participation all potential respondents were informed that the interview would be recorded, that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to leave the research process at any time. I also made it clear that names and identifying details would be made anonymous. Consent forms (see appendix 2) were given out to all respondents, but people would often sign these without reading them. I therefore read through the consent form in order to make sure people were fully aware of what they were committing themselves to.

3.4 Research strategy

In this section I will try to set out clearly the interrelationship between what I think can be researched (ontological position), linking it to what we can know about it (epistemological position) and how to go about acquiring it (methodological approach). I do believe that the researcher’s methodological approach, underpinned by and reflecting specific ontological and epistemological assumptions should influence the choice of approach and research methods adopted in my study. Methodology is concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry; it therefore pertains to the science and study of methods and the assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced.

My ontological stance sees the ‘self’ as relationally and interactionally composed; its construction is historically, culturally and contextually specific and changes subtly in different circumstances. Thus the challenge is to find an alternative methodology to those that attempt to find ‘essential’ differences between social or racial groups as we can see in the interpretive marketing research work that focuses on the study of the culturally shared or collective understandings and social practices that give meaning to
and guide marketplace activity (for example, Belk, 2007). Instead I need a methodology that can help me to map the co-operative forces that construct the self or all the selves.

While the interpretive turn in marketing research arguably refers to a fairly heterogeneous body of research that draws from multiple theoretical traditions (for example: Moisander, 2008; Moisander, Peñaloza, and Valtonen, 2009), what makes a study ‘interpretive’ is, perhaps, that it sees social action as intentional and rule governed; that is, performed in order to achieve particular purposes and in conformity to some rules and norms (Fay and Moon, 1994). Therefore, social action such as marketplace activity can only be made sense of or interpreted based on knowledge of these intentions and social meanings.

Consequently, interpretive approaches (see examples in table 3.2) to marketing inquiry are generally based on the idea that the social action can only to be interpreted by contextualising it in the cultural system of concepts, rules, conventions, and beliefs that give meaning to that action. All interpretive approaches to social inquiry would seem to be based on the basic methodological principle that the concepts that are used to theorise and analyse social action (be it physical activities, mental events, or institutions) must capture the specific individual and/or collective meanings that these phenomena have among the social actors who are studied. This means that researchers engage in systematic observation of the ways in which the members of the particular culture or community under study use language and other systems of meaning to make sense of their everyday life and to achieve social order. It also means that the research problems and the interpretive framework that guide empirical analysis are continuously revised and further developed as the researchers become familiar with his/her subjects’ lives and learn more about the objects of their study.
However, I prefer to follow a research strategy that is sensitive to new forms of writing that share the power of interpretation between the writer, reader and subject. I take inspiration from the work of ‘new ethnography’ (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) that allows the ‘native informant’ to read and contest the ethnographer’s characterisations of her/his own culture. The fundamental goal of this approach is to apprehend the ‘others’ in such a way as not to deny or diffuse the individual claim to subjecthood. My research strategy is informed by the notion of culture as a collective and historically contingent construct, thus this strategy claims to be sensitive to cultural differences and within cultures to the multiplicity of individual experiences.

### 3.4.1 Participatory research

To be able to share the authority of interpretation between the participant and myself, I adopt a participatory research approach that attempts to change these traditional power relations and to ensure that research is owned and controlled by research participants as well as researchers. As Cornwell and Jewkes (1995, p.166-7) note: ‘the key difference between participatory and conventional methodologies lies in the location of power in the research process’
Participatory methodologies have arisen from qualitative research approaches which aim to reflect, explore and disseminate the views, concerns, feelings and experiences of research participants from their own perspectives. The realisation of participatory research goes beyond this, however, to engage participants in the conduct and evaluation of research, with the construction of non-hierarchical research relations (Zarb, 1992). Participatory research, then, attempts to change the social relations of research processes.

A crucial tenet of participatory research is that it is research with, rather than on people (Reason and Heron, 1986). Reason and Heron (1986) believe that participatory research invites people to take part in the co-creation of knowledge about them. Using the term ‘partnership research’, Lloyd, Preston-Shoot, Temple and Wu (1996) recognise similar principles: non-hierarchical research relationships setting the research agenda, data analysis and dissemination.

The general change in terminology from ‘research subjects’ to ‘research participants’ is indicative of the influence of participatory approaches. Participatory research aims to involve the researched individual, at every stage of the research process. There is no place for ‘subjects’ or passive cooperation in this approach; rather everyone involved is an active participant. In my research the participant will be simultaneously the subject and object of the research; acting as a co-researcher they will observe and interpret culture through reflecting on his or her personal experience and self-narrative.

Reflexivity can be harnessed, Smith (1993) argues, as a valuable part of the research exercise itself. In the practice of doing a research project it is possible extend some implications of the reflexive methodology. If we view the individual as a self-reflexive agent, this should hold for the participant as well as for the researcher. Therefore, we should find a methodological way to use this naturally occurring reflection to the benefit of our research and enlist the participant as a co-researcher in the project. This point of view has been promoted by the ‘new paradigm’ researchers (see Reason and Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1988) that encourage researchers to conduct cooperative, or experiential, inquiries. Such work has a number of theoretical roots,
including humanistic psychology, systems theory, and critiques of experimentalism.

Self-reflection in this research is different from the psychologically and/or phenomenologically inspired introspective tradition that has invited some interest in consumer research (for example, Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1989). Phenomenological research considers the introspection process as a means of access to inner thoughts and feelings that are otherwise inaccessible (Gould, 1995). In post structuralist and/or anti-essentialist research the point is not to use self-reflection to provide access to inner worlds that are otherwise inaccessible. Instead, the idea is to use the self to make visible cultural meanings and practices that are usually invisible owing to their taken-for granted or marginalised nature. As these practices create, shape and constrain modes of being and thinking they call for a type of investigation that is new to marketing.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection strategy of my research is designed to help the participants to explore the landscape of their self by eliciting life narratives and their constituent attachments. The data were collected in two stages. The initial phase is based on the collection of two collages: one of self-identity and one of shopping experience. The objective of this phase was to give the participants an opportunity to explore and map the different discursive influences in their lives. The second stage was based on a narrative interview that allowed elicitation of narratives and self-reflections. The collages were used as a guide for the structure of the conversation. The process of my research followed these steps:
1. Instruction on preparing the collages was given to the participant
2. The participant produced two collages (self-identity and shopping experience)
3. Narrative interview
4. Preparation of a rigorous and thorough ‘orthographic’ transcript – a ‘verbatim’ account of all verbal utterances (Poland, 2002)
5. When these transcripts were ready, the researcher used a coding method to create categories and themes to sort participant’s attachments into distinct groupings
6. These groupings were discussed and agreed between the co-researchers (researcher and participant) and given a self-descriptive label by the subject.

7. Write-up of the report

3.5.1 Collages

The creative self is our silent partner. It is always ready and willing to help us to express our true desires in the world. The lover of books who spends hours browsing in bookstores, the amateur gardener who loses herself weeding and planting, the hiking enthusiast who can’t seem to get enough of nature’s beauty. These are ordinary people honouring the impulse of the creative life. Although it is our silent partner, it does have a voice. It speaks in images, in daydreams and night dreams. It sends messages through the body.

(Capacchione, 2000 Visioning p. 15)

Images are everywhere. They permeate our academic work, everyday lives, conversations and dreams. They are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies as well with definitions of history, space and truth.

(Pink, 2001, p.17)

Recently, many writers have argued that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies. It is now often suggested that much meaning is conveyed by visual images. We are of course, surrounded by different sorts of visual technologies - photography, film, video, digital graphics, and TV for example- and the images they bring us - TV programs, advertisements, video clips, snapshots, public art, movies, surveillance video footage, newspaper pictures, paintings. All these different sorts of technologies and images offer views of the world; they render the world in visual terms. But as Rose (2011, p.56) says: ‘this rendering, even by photographs, is never innocent; these images are never transparent windows to the world. They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways’.

The quotes above reflect the importance of the visual in understanding consumers’ world. Fyfe and Law (1988, p.2) for example, claim that: ‘depiction, picturing and seeing are ubiquitous features of the process by which most human beings come to
know the world as it really is for them’, and John Berger (1972, p.7) concludes that ‘seeing comes before words’. Other writers, however, prefer to historicise the importance of the visual, observing the increasing saturation of western societies by visual images. Many claim that this process has reached unprecedented levels, so that westerners now interact with the world mainly through how we see it. Martin Jay (1993) has used the term ‘ocularcentrism’ to describe the apparent centrality of the visual to contemporary western life.

Mirzoeff (1998) suggests that social reality is ocularcentric not simply because visual images are more and more common, nor because knowledge about the world is increasingly articulated visually but simply because our experiences are constructed visually.

The roots for this conceptualisation can be found in the work of scholars who are interested in the link between the visual and psychology such as Jung (1964) and Campbell (2012). They claim that feelings, intuitions, wishes and dreams speak most powerfully in the language of images and symbols rather than words.

Paying attention to the effects of images is fundamental to a new field of study that has been emerging over the past years. The focus of this field is something called visual culture (for an example of the academic discussion in this area see the Journal of Visual Culture).

The main interest in visual culture for my research is for the way in which images visualise social differences. As Fyfe and Law (1988, p.1) say: ‘a depiction is never just an illustration ... it is the site for the construction and depiction of social difference’. One of the central claims of the visual culture literature is that social categories are not natural but instead are constructed. These constructions can take a visual form. This point has been made by feminist and post colonial writers such as Gilroy (1987) who have studied the ways femininity and ethnicity have been visualised. Looking carefully at images, then entails, among other things, thinking about how they offer
very particular visions, or a story, of social categories such as class, gender, race, sexuality, and so on.

Lyn Jamieson (1998) uses the term ‘stories’ to describe different accounts of social reality. We all tell stories about our lives. We tell ourselves stories and we relate them to others, as a mean of making sense of ourselves. As Moore suggests: ‘narrative is a strategy of placing us within a historically constituted world ... if narrative makes the world intelligible, it also makes ourselves intelligible’ (1994, p.119). In this sense a story is what provides coherence. It is not important whether our stories can be verified or disproved, so much as how we construct these narratives, how we put them together to make sense of ourselves. This is what is relevant to the exploration of identity.

The production of identities through narratives is a dynamic process. We achieve a configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; Polkingtorne (1988, p.150) says: ‘We constantly have to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self then, is not a static thing or a substance but a configuration of personal events into an historical unity, which includes not only what one has been, but also anticipation of what one will be’. In telling stories about ourselves we are endeavouring to make sense of experience by putting together the often disjointed and fragmented pieces of everyday life (Woodward, 2002).

Bach (2007) has developed this idea and linked it to the discussion on the importance of visuals. She offers the idea of Visual Narrative Inquiry (2007). This is an intentional, reflective research method in which researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively. Visual narrative inquirers work from a position where experience is an undivided continuous interaction between humans and their environments that includes thoughts, feelings, doings, and perceiving. Visual narrative inquiry builds from a view of narrative inquiry as a study of ‘experience as story’ and as a way of thinking about
experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a narrative understanding of experiences. Visual narrative inquiry adds the layer of meaning so that photographs and other visuals become ways of living and telling one's stories of experience.

In her research Bach invites four girls to create ‘field texts’: approximately 100 photographs of people, objects, and places from their everyday living. The girls were invited to share their field texts with Bach, and she describes the conversations they had about the photographs as ‘visual narrative’.

Based on approaches used by Weiser, Bach invited the girls to focus on four categories of photographs that captured images from their everyday living. The first, consisted of photographs chosen by the girls to share with the researcher because of particular feelings, moods, or qualities the girls believed were projected in these selected photos. Examples of field text within this category are a bedroom, a piano, Calling Lake at sunset, friends partying, and people in public places. In the second category, the girls photograph their favourite place, activity, person, and objects that were special for them. The third category was a series of photos taken of the girls by a significant other. This category was included as a deliberate form of self-portrait created by the girls themselves and with the help of someone they trusted. The last category the girls were invited to share selected photographs from their family albums. Bach notes that in this category she was shown and heard about ‘those affected by social taboos, divorce, illness and death, those whose daily lives were undervalued, stories of child care, schooling, housework, and of visiting friends’ (Bach, 2007, p. 41).

The last layer in the development of my collage method is inspired by the work of Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003) on consumers’ desires. They have asked their respondents to express their fantasies, dreams and visions of desire visually by means of collage. I have asked the participant to create collages and use visual imagery to describe how they perceive their different worlds. In difference from Belk. (2003), the collage was not a subject for my interpretation but viewed as a storyboard or blueprint of life in the way the participant sees it.
My research intention is to find a way to use visual method that will help the participants to explore their life narratives and its attachments. The reason is that I believe that the study of the visual world will help us to understand the production, reproduction and transformation of culture. Marketing research needs to explore the manner in which people see, visually represent and conceive of things, other people, environments and situations. The focus of interest of my research is thus on what is seen and observable in a particular cultural context as well as how these visibilities are discursively constructed.

The participants have been asked to produce two collages: Self-Identity and shopping experience. I discuss these in turn.

3.5.1.1 Self-identity collage

The development of self-identity collage was an adaptation of the ‘Personality Web Protocol’ (PWP) of Raggatt (2000) and Bach’s visual Ethnography Inquiry (2007). It was designed to help individuals explore the landscape of their positional self by eliciting life narratives and their constituent attachments.

Bakhtin (1984) proposed that identity develops initially in a process of dialogue between the individual and his/her culture. The individual appropriates meaning from the culture in the form of important attachments, to people, events, valued objects, environments, and even orientations to our bodies. Similarly Harre (1995) has proposed that the self is constituted by multiple narrative voices, each voice laying claim to and underpinned by a different set of identity resources or attachments. Over time this dialogue becomes increasingly complex and reflexive as the individual interacts with the wider world and appropriates new attachments, new stories and new voices. Each voice has its own constellation of attachments (Raggat, 2006, p.16).

Raggatt (2000) explains that these attachments include important people, stories, personal myths, critical events, places, objects, possessions, attitudes and orientations to one’s body (Raggatt, 2000). In order to address the question of how
can we observe and measure this self, Raggatt (2000) has developed a research protocol that aims to help the participant to explore important attachments and life narratives. These attachments were organised into four categories: people (including important associates and public figures), objects in the world (including important places, possessions, clothing, works of art), life events (from childhood, adolescence and adulthood), and body orientation. At a later stage these attachments were elicited in a semi-structured narrative interview.

The participants were asked (see appendix 3) to create a visual account of their self-identity and the inspirations that influence their self-identity. In line with Raggat’s (2000) taxonomy, the participants were asked to include in their self-identity collage the following categories: different social circles both positive and negative, private and public figures, favourite objects, places, favourite possessions, inspiring works of art, and memorable life events (for detailed description of the different attachments see table 3.3). The main aim is to capture the participant's main life discourses in the social (people), physical/environmental (objects), and temporal/historical (events) sides of their lives.

Table 3.3: Description of Personal Attachments (adapted from Raggatt, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Objects-in-the-world</th>
<th>Life events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liked associate</td>
<td>Important possession</td>
<td>Childhood-Peak experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked public figure</td>
<td>Important possession</td>
<td>Childhood-Nadir experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disliked associate</td>
<td>Symbolic object</td>
<td>Adolescence-Peak experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disliked public figure</td>
<td>Place-in-the-world</td>
<td>Adolescence-Nadir experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other important associate (a)</td>
<td>Place-in-the-world</td>
<td>Adulthood-Peak experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other important associate (b)</td>
<td>Clothing, costume</td>
<td>Adulthood-Nadir experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clothing, costume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work of art or imagination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although orientation to body part (a category that has been offered by Raggatt in his taxonomy) could be useful to elicit discussion on beauty and appearance, preliminary conversations with the participants indicated that South Asian female participants would not feel comfortable enough to discuss this category with a male researcher. However, at the end of the data collection stage it was clear that the other categories in the self-identity collage and shopping experience collage have offered other opportunities to discuss these issues.

My hope was that the self-identity collage would enable the participants to identify the different, sometimes even contradictory, cultural influences on their self-identity and stimulate detailed conversation in the interview stage (for examples of self-identity collage see appendix 4).

3.5.1.2 Shopping experience collages

“Buy what you don’t have yet, or what you really want, which can be mixed with what you already own. Buy only because something excites you, not just for the simple act of shopping.” (Lagerfeld, 2013)

The second collage describes one shopping experience of the participant’s choice. This collage aims to help the participant to gain insight of the cultural inspirations for shopping experiences. This collage is proposed to complement what is missing in the ‘self-identity’ collage: the experience. Based on a conceptualisation of the self as an experiential being (Sartre, 1967), shopping experience collages explore the integration of ‘experience’ into the 'I'.

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) called for studies of experiential behaviour. Within this realm they located entertainment and arts and leisure, as well as day-to-day product usage and related, consumption activities. The authors emphasised the multisensory properties of consumers, nonverbal stimuli, symbolic meanings and hedonic tasks, in contrast to previous work emphasising cognitive information processing, decision making, verbal stimuli and problem-solving tasks. My collage
method supports this experiential tradition but approaches it through a narrative tradition rather than their mental-processing tradition.

In line with Penaloza (1998) and her self-ethnography at Nike Town I would like to explore the subjective and experiential aspects of self-identity. This collage tries to reveal the participants’ authorial conventions and situated subjectivity. The participants have been requested to take a notepad and camera (if required) with them when they go shopping and take a picture or write any image that comes to their mind while they are in the shopping experience. When they return from shopping they have been requested to make a collage with the item they bought placed in the middle and around it a visual description of the images that came to their mind while they were in the shopping experience (see appendix 5 for examples of shopping experience collages).

This collage builds upon the open and flexible nature of images, ‘a medium noted for its realism, yet routinely subject to multiple perceptions and interpretations’ (Schwartz 1998, p.122). Schwartz (1998) considers images as inherently ambiguous, their specifiable meanings emergent in the viewing and discussion process. This ambiguity is not a disadvantage or limitation for the purpose of my research; rather, the multiple meanings negotiated by viewers can be mined for the rich data they yield. Building upon the evidence that viewers tend to experience their lives ‘through’ images (Woodward 2002), I have made use of images to help the participant to elicit the collection of images they have created during their shopping experience.

By asking the participant to make the shopping experience collage and bring it to the interview for discussion, I have tried to establish the cultural context delineating what the discourses were that influenced the participant while taking part in the shopping experience and understand ‘what significances are located in the image’ (Musello, 1980, p. 39). By eliciting this context, I have attempted to gain access to meanings attached by the participant to the purchased object and the consumption
experience and link these to the discourses and narratives that arose in the self-
identity collage.

3.5.1.2.1 Process of making the shopping experience collage

1. The participants have been asked to choose any shopping experience of their week;
2. Take with them a camera and notepad and record any image or thought that comes to their mind while they are in the shopping experience and which inspires them;
3. When they return home they are invited to make a collage with the picture of the item they bought in the middle and around it a visual description of the images that came to their mind while they were shopping;
4. They have been asked to bring this collage together with the self-identity collage to the interview.

3.5.2 In-depth interview

‘Constructivism argues for multiple realities, which are intangible, local and specific in their nature, all claims to ‘closure’ are suspect. In this reality academic research should strive towards ever more sophisticated, informed and inclusive constructions of the world through the interaction of the researcher and the researched’. (Molteberg and Bergstrom, 2002, p. 21).

‘The interview context mediates how participants choose to represent themselves; to actively construct their lives and to recount significant events in their lives. Therefore the point of narration during the interview is a lens through which the past and the future can be ‘seen, remembered and foretold’ (Miller, 2000, p.48).

‘Influenced by postmodern epistemologies, interviewing has changed. Our society became ‘the interview society’ (Silverman, 1993; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997), meaning, interviewing is no longer reserved for social researchers or investigative reporters but has become the very stuff of life. Members of society spend much of their time asking questions, being asked questions themselves, or watching TV shows about people asked questions and answering them in turn. ‘They all seem to have routine knowledge of the rules on interviewing, with no need for instructions’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p.162).
In line with the writers above and Ellis and Berger (2002) I make a claim that the boundaries between the interviewer and interviewee are becoming blurred as the traditional relationships and roles between the two are no longer seen as natural. Instead, interviewer and participants collaborate together in constructing their narratives (Cohen, Mansion and Morrison, 2001).

Gubrium and Holstein (2002, p.162) explain that the researcher does not hold authority over the participant. According to this view respondents are no longer seen as passive participants whose opinions we process completely in our own terms. Consequently, my concern was more about issues of representation, with the participant’s own understanding as he or she framed and represented their ‘opinions’. Cicourel (1982, p.41) takes this idea even further and suggests that the interview is an interactional event based on reciprocal stocks of knowledge.

This idea of a ‘customised’ interview according to the experience that develops in the meeting between the researcher and the participant is a contradiction to traditional interviews where the goal of the interview is to obtain or measure consistency in the participant’s responses and consistency is valued because it is taken as evidence of a corresponding set of actions or beliefs. If the interview talk is consistent, the argument goes, it must reflect a consistent reality beyond. Potter and Wetherell (1987) agree that consistency is important for the discourse analyst, however, not in the same sense as traditional interviews. Consistency helps the researcher to identify regular patterns in language use. Instead, Potter and Wetherell claim that the interview should be spontaneous and provide a rich amount of information.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) claim that consistency suggests that participants are drawing on a limited number of compatible discourses when answering questions. They conclude that analyses which identify only the consistent responses are thus sometimes uninformative because they tell us little about the full range of accounting resources people use when constructing the meaning of their social world and not so clearly reveal the function of participants’ constructions.
Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) suggest that interviews in social research should enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and express how they regard situations from their own point of view. According to a constructionist perspective, the interviewee and interviewer are always actively engaged in constructing meaning (Silverman, 2001). The respondent's narrative is not viewed as portraying a fixed reality but is a construct of reality in conjunction with the interviewer. Consequently, my interview seeks to understand and develop phenomena — ethnicity and self-identities — rather than simply collect facts and figures. Such an interview allows the respondent to talk freely and emotionally and adds a richness, depth, authenticity and honesty to the description of their experiences (Oppenheim, 1992, p.65). The interviewing was structured around particular themes, based on the taxonomy of the collages that the participant has prepared before the interview and the probes in the instruction letter. The structure of the conversation was flexible, which encourages an in-depth response, and allows the researcher to probe and clarify points.

The interview allows the participants to articulate their own life experiences and also to reflect on their meaning. It provides an indication of how they understand themselves within their world, where and how they place values, and what particular meanings they attach to their actions and locations in the world. According to feminist thinking (e.g. Reinharz and Davidman, 1992) the categories and concepts individuals use for reflecting and evaluating themselves in the interview, come from a cultural context. For British born South Asian individuals, and maybe for others as well, this cultural context has many sides and is made of many contradictory discourses. An exploration of the discourses, narratives, and meanings the participants use to articulate their own experiences will lead to better awareness of the social forces and ideas affecting them.

Marcus and Fischer (1986) develop this idea to promote interviews that allow diverse voices to emerge. They suggest that the interviewer needs to take a ‘dialogic’ approach in which the focus is on the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee as a way of ‘exposing how knowledge develops’ (1986, p.69). Marcus
and Fischer (1986, p.71) also suggest the use of polyphony, which is ‘the registering of different point[s] of view in multiple voices’. The aim here is to reduce the editorial authority of the researcher. Following this idea, the main priority of my interview methodology was to generate an interview situation that allows diversity of participants’ accounting practices. The main effort was to create good communication that enables interview partners to collaborate and to converse about what is being said until they are confident they adequately understand each other (see, e.g. Cicourel, 1982; Clark, 1998; Schegloff, 1984; Tannen, 1989).

Primarily the questions came up in the conversation as a means for further understanding or clarification of what we are experiencing at a particular moment of the conversation. McNamara (2009) explain that with the informal conversational approach, the researcher does not ask any specific types of questions, but rather relies on the interaction with the participants and the structure of the collages to guide the interview process.

3.5.2.1 Process of the interview

- The interview took between two and three hours to complete.
- Participants had the choice of place for the interview. They could do it in their home or one of the universities I had access to. All the participants came to either the University of Manchester site (for the north western participants) or the University of Derby for the East Midland participants.
- All the interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and video camera. The interviewees were given the option of being interviewed without the video camera if the camera would interfere with their ease.
- One week prior to this session, participants were provided with a copy of preparation questions and probes (please see figure 3.1) and a notebook to write notes before the interview. In this way participants were given ample time to ponder the key issues for the conversation, so as to facilitate reflexivity, rather than those produced spontaneously. This strategy, I would
argue, facilitated the development of openness, trust and rapport in the interview situation.

- We have used the structure of the collages as the structure of the conversation.
- The first statement has been used to initiate the conversation: ‘beginning from the photo of yourself in the middle, tell us why did you choose these photos as opposed to other possible ones?’
- When the participant has described his/her collage going through all images and photos, the conversation has been developed into an open-ended narrative interview.
- The questions that had been provided prior to the interview and the structure of the collages gave the structure for the interview.

Figure 3.1: Interview questions and probes

- Look at the figures you have chosen and think why they are important to you; try to remember a short story that involves them.
- For one of the public figures, imagine it was possible right now to have a conversation. What would you choose to talk about? If you could invite her/him to join you in one of your life style activities what would you choose? Would you invite any of the others in your personal life to join you and the public figure and if yes who would you invite and why.
- Look at the figures that influence your life (private and public). How do they influence your consumer behaviour? Are there any differences or contradictions in their influences?
- Think about the objects in your self-identity collage. Why they are important, are they equally important in different situations and around different circles of people in your private life?
- After you have analysed your self-identity collage, look at the shopping experience collage and try to find any links and reflections between your self-identity and the visual inspirations you have experienced.

3.5.3 Second Interview

After I completed the coding task, the participants were asked to look at my categorisation details of this stage (see section 3.6.1.10 p.46 for an explanation of the categorisation process) and group these categories into new clusters or “self-relevant facets” (Raggat, 2006, p.67) in a subjective fashion. The participants are asked to try and limit the number of clusters they made to between two and six (in other words, to
make large, broad clusters rather than small, specific ones). No restriction, however, was placed on the number of clusters that could be created. A self-relevant descriptive label for each cluster was elicited from the participant (e.g., “ethnic self,” “religious voice,” “adventurer”). The discussion was tape-recorded and transcribed.

This procedure effectively produces a multidimensional semantic map of the individual’s self-relevant attachments and categories. The importance of this map is that it represents the web of associations among an interviewee’s attachments (people, objects, events etc.). This means that interpretation of the research data began with the participants’ own efforts to sort through and label clusters of attachments.

This interview has lasted an hour. Participants have been offered compensation for their travel costs. All the participants were happy to meet again and were very curious to read the transcript of the interview.

3.5.4 Summary of data collection

Data collection stage consists of:

- 35 hours of first interview
- 13 hours of second interview
- 26 collages (self-identity and shopping experience)
- 837 pages of interview transcripts

3.6 Data Analysis

A discourse framework for analysing data can be constructed in a number of different ways, depending on the research questions as well as on the researcher’s theoretical perspective. I would like to base my data analysis on the theory of Laclau and Mouffe’s ‘Discourse Theory’ (1985). For the purpose of this discussion I use Jorgensen and Philips’s (2011, p.138) conceptualisation of discourse as a particular way of representing the world or in their words ‘the fixation [even if temporal] of
meaning within a particular domain’. There are many discourses within any domain
and these discourses compete for hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Thus, the
main effort of my analysis will be to map different discourses that partly cover the
terrain of ethnicity and self-identity, a terrain that each discourse competes to fill
with meaning in its own way. Jorgensen and Philips’s (2011) claim that by
concentrating on the different, competing discourses within the same domain, it is
possible to investigate where a particular discourse is dominant, where there is a
struggle between different discourses, and which common sense assumptions are
shared by all the prevailing discourses.

The main challenge is in how to map these discourses; how could I decide where one
discourse stops and another begins? For example how do I know when a discourse
of family ends and a discourse of community begins? To answer this question I
followed the advice of Jorgensen and Philips (2011, p.146) and treated discourse as
an ‘analytical concept’, that is, as an ‘entity that the researcher projects onto the
reality in order to create a framework for study’. This means that the question of
delimitation is determined strategically in relation to the research aims. Thus the
research aims determine what can be treated as a single discourse. For instance
some of the marketing researchers (for example Oswald 1989; Penaloza 1987;
Askegaard et al., 2005) treat ethnicity as a single discourse (Haitian, Mexican,
Greenlandic etc.) that is, as a homogeneous fixation of meaning. In my research I am
interested in the multiplicity of discourses that construct ethnicity therefore it makes
more sense to explore the sub-discourses that create an ethnicity discourse.

Delimitation of discourses begins with the aid of secondary literature that identifies
particular discourses, but obviously the work continues in the analysis of the
material.

Treating the delimitation of discourses as an analytical exercise entails
understanding discourses as objects that the researcher constructs rather
than as objects that exist in a delimited form of reality, ready to be identified
and mapped. (Jorgensen and Philips, 2011, p.144)
When delineating the different discourses my focus was on the following:

- The aspects of the world to which the discourse ascribes meaning
- The particular ways in which each of the discourses ascribe meaning
- The points on which there is an open struggle between different representations

Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory (1985), my analysis is based on the view of discourse as constitutive of social practices and subjects. Therefore, to understand the dynamic of self-identity construction of a second generation of British South Asian individuals, I needed to understand the process where elements of existing discourses are articulated together to form new inter-discursive mixes. Consequently, my analysis diverged from other discursive analyses approaches in focusing on the circulation of discourses in society and mapping this circulation rather than focusing on situated language use in specific interactional contexts. My analysis focuses on the construction of different identities within different discourses, analysing the potentially antagonistic relations between the different identities. Therefore the purpose of analysis is to explore the ways in which people, through positioning themselves and being positioned by others, construct, negotiate and challenge different accounts; these represent different understandings of the world, including different attributions of responsibility for actions and events.

The nature of the analytical focus has been preliminarily determined in the initial formulation of the research question, however, the strategies may, throughout the analysis, help to operationalize and specify these questions. Thus the analysis strategy helped me to ask more specific questions of the material, questions which, in turn, may be explored by using more specific discourse analytical tools. These tools are used for further investigation which might in turn lead to modification of the overall understandings. The analytical tool I have decided to use here is thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
3.6.1 Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a data analysis method that provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.16). I find ‘thematic analysis’ to be a useful analytic tool for my research because it helps to examine the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this sense, there is a great compatibility between the theoretical foundation of my analysis in the Laclau and Mouffe (1985) theory and thematic analysis as my analysis tool.

3.6.1.1 What counts as a theme?

A theme captures 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 and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). An important question to address in terms of coding is what counts as a pattern/theme, or what quantity of data need to be accumulated for data segments to become a ‘theme’? Braun and Clarke explain that this is a question of prevalence both in terms of space within each data item, and prevalence across the entire data set. Ideally there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is then significant enough. Furthermore, the ‘keyness’ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures. Instead the importance of a theme is to be seen in terms of whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.6.1.2 Inductive thematic analysis

Themes or patterns within data have been identified in an inductive, or ‘bottom up’ way (similar to the research of Frith & Gleeson, 2004). An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990, p.169). I was coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions.
3.6.1.3 Semantic or explicit level of analysis

Before embarking on the analysis process I had to make a decision that revolves around the ‘level’ at which themes are to be identified: at an explicit level or at a latent, sometimes called interpretative, level (Boyatzis, 1998). A thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively or primarily on one of these levels. In my analysis I take the explicit approach, that the themes have been identified within the explicit, or surface, meanings of the data. I did not look for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written. The first step in the process of analysis began with description where the data have simply been organised to demonstrate patterns in semantic and visual contents, then summarised. The next stage was the stage of interpretation, at this stage there is an attempt to theorise the patterns and their broader meanings and discuss their implications (Patton, 1990). This discussion is often relating to previous literature (for example, Frith & Gleeson, 2004).

3.6.1.4 The process of my thematic analysis

The first step is looking for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data; this step began during data collection. Following the advice of Ryan and Bernard (2000), I have immersed myself in the data to the extent that I became familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. I did it by repeated reading of the data, and reading the data in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns and so on.

3.6.1.5 Transcription of data

Various conventions exist for transforming spoken texts into written texts (see Edwards and Lampert, 1993; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Some systems of transcription have been developed for specific forms of analysis – such as the ‘Jefferson’ system for Conversation Analysis (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). However, thematic analysis, even constructionist thematic analysis, does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, or even narrative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The literature
does not offer a single way to perform thematic analysis and there is no one agreed set of guidelines to follow when producing a transcript. However, most of the writers (for example Edwards and Lampert, 1993) agree that it requires a rigorous and thorough ‘orthographic’ transcript – a ‘verbatim’ account of all verbal utterances. It is important that the transcript retains the data required from the verbal accounts in a the closest way as possible to the original nature of the conversation. On the methodological level it is important that ‘the transcription convention is practically suited to the purpose of analysis’ (Edwards, 1993, p.19).

3.6.1.6 Visual Data

The data in this research include reflections on the life experiences of the participants, not only verbal text but visual data (photos and images) from the collages too. Visual narratives are not complete without narrative support through dialogue and language. Jung (1964) explains that an image can have many different meanings according to the individual’s associations. Because of this, Jung was vehemently opposed to any kind of "dream dictionary," where the images are given fixed meanings. Photographs do not themselves preserve meaning (Wood, 2009; Bach, 2007) as much as they offer appearances for which a narrator can make us understand and provide us with a prospect to reflect and grow from our experiences. Therefore, data collected were analysed and coded according to themes that emerged from the text as a whole, written and visual. See example in Annissa’s collage and text below:

A Here in the picture ... because I am from Pakistan, my nationality is Pakistani but I felt more safe in Dubai than I probably would feel safe here [England] or in Pakistan because their law is pretty strict so you can easily shop till 2 o’clock ... That is what I quite enjoyed about Dubai (92-97).
In other cases my analysis brings together the individual themes, sometimes contradictory, as all aspects can be seen in relation to each other while remaining explicit and meaningful. In the example below, Mirza’s collage describes his theme of having fun the ‘British way’ and then discusses his wish not to hurt his parents with this behaviour. Another example is Asim’s data that express his desire to have a western-looking girlfriend by bringing a photo of a famous British nude model in his shopping experience collage and in a later stage, in the verbatim part of his data, he speaks about his commitment to Muslim values:
After reading the data in first review I have generated an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about it. This stage involves the production of initial codes from the data. At this stage, the codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting, and refers to ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). See figure 3.4 for an applications of codes to a short segment of data.

3.6.1.7 Generating initial codes

Mirza: I would not want to disappoint my parents and I know this would hurt them and I would not want to hurt them. It’s like back the other day I never touch alcohol or smoked a cigarette now I do and if I told my parents that they would be kind of disappointed. So I wouldn’t tell them. You know you don’t want to hurt their feelings.

Asim: Yeah I do. My religion is close to me. I’d like to keep it that way. I go to pray (933).
Figure 3.4: Codes applied to data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Community expectations for economic success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community will not like inter-marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. English people are under-achievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Car is a status symbol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probably still, because if I married an English person, I still might have wedding to go to, Asian wedding to go to and things like that, so I still have to turn up in my car maybe and to prove to them like you know, I’ve married a English some people might not have liked it, to say look you know I’ve married an English but I’m still doing ok, I’ve got a nice car. (Nisha 965-97)

Figure 3.5: Image and text from Sanitta’s self-identity collage

Living between cultures (Hyphen)

Coding can be done either manually or through qualitative data analysis software (see Kelle, 2004 or Seale, 2000). In my research I used the manual coding method rather than software. There are numerous discourses in society representing given particularities, which claim their rights to construe the meaning of signs; these signs have to be considered within that network of determination. In line with Laclau et al. (1985), I do not see these signs, or individuals, as merely a locus, or position within the discourse. Instead I see them as situated in between discursive practices; none of them is capable of identifying the sign “totally”. Therefore, the meaning of signs
appears as an empty space between articulations. The individual locates her/himself temporarily within a discourse and uses discursive resources to identify him/herself, but none of these resources is sufficient for the purpose and therefore the individual soon moves to the next discourse. I did not feel that any of the existing software offers a sufficient solution to capturing this conceptualisation of the meaning of signs.

The process of coding the extracts involved the use of notes on the texts, marking with highlighters sections of the text to indicate potential patterns and to identify relevant segments of data. In the next stage I have copied extracts of data from individual transcripts and collated each code together in separate computer files.

Some writers (for example Bryman, 2001) suggest the one of the problem of using coding method in analysing texts is that the context is lost. To minimise this problem I have coded extracts of data as inclusively as I could keeping a little of the surrounding data as well.

In many cases individual extracts of data have been coded into as many different ‘themes’ as they fit into so an extract could be coded as many times as relevant. I have taken into account possible contradictions in the data, and my thematic ‘map’ did not attempt to smooth out or ignore the tensions and inconsistencies within and across data items but actually to explore them further.

3.6.1.8 Searching for themes

This stage begins when all data have been initially coded and collated, and I had a long list of the different codes that have been identified across the data set. This stage, which re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. At this stage I began considering how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme and ended with a collection of possible themes and sub-themes; all extracts of data have been coded in relation to them.
3.6.1.9 **Reviewing themes**

This stage begins when a set of possible themes is ready, and it involves the refinement of those themes. During this phase, it became evident that some candidate themes are not really independent themes, while others might collapse into each other (for example, it became clear that Western culture and British culture were not perceived by the participants as two separated discourses). Other themes might break down into sub-themes. I have used Patton’s (1990) dual criteria for judging categories — internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. If the candidate themes appeared to form a coherent pattern, I then moved on to the second level of this phase. If a possible theme did not fit, I have considered whether I need to change the theme itself, or whether I should find another theme for this particular segment. Once I was satisfied that the themes I have created adequately outline the stories that come up from the data I moved on to the next phase.

The second part of this phase has analysed the entire data set. Boyatzis (1998) explains that at this level, we consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set. This phase involves a re-reading of the entire data set to achieve two purposes. The first is to establish whether the themes ‘work’ in relation to the data set. The second is to find a place for any additional data within themes that I have missed in earlier stages.

At the end of this phase, I had a clear idea of what the different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.
3.6.1.10 Defining and naming themes

This stage required a second interview with the participants to achieve final refinements of the thematic map. The purpose is to define and further refine the themes that will be presented for my analysis, and analyse the data within them. By ‘define and refine’ I mean identifying what each theme is about (as well as the overall themes), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures.

Following the procedure Raggat (2006) has offered, I have reviewed the collated data extracts of their interview analysis with each participant. Then I have asked them to help me to put these extracts into a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative. For each individual theme, we have created the ‘story’ that each theme tells; I have tried to find out how this fits into the broader overall ‘story’ that I tell about the data, in relation to my research question, to ensure there is not too much overlap between themes. The participants were asked to help me to limit the number of themes and codes they see to make large, broad, rather than small, specific themes and codes. No restriction, however, was placed on the number of clusters that could be created. A self-relevant descriptive label for each cluster was then elicited from the participant (for example, Bally offered the title ‘life values’ in addition to the themes I have offered, Asim offered ‘friends and girlfriends’ and Nisha has offered the ‘rebel voice’). Thematic links have been elicited between each of these labels.

The advantage of doing this second process with participants as ‘co-analysts’ is that it had helped me not just to paraphrase the content of the data extracts presented, but to put them in the context of the self-narrative of the participants.

3.6.1.11 Producing the report

This stage began when the set of fully worked out themes was ready, and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. The task of writing-up a thematic analysis was to tell the complicated story of my data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) say that it is important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a
concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes.

3.7 Reflection

I have reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of my research strategy, design and methods throughout this chapter. In this section I will further examine some of the limitations of the study and the potential ways of doing things differently.

One potential shortcoming of my research methodology was the lack of diversity among respondents. Due to the nature of the recruitment, via a snowballing sample strategy among the British South Asian community groups, participants were predominantly Pakistani Muslim and Indian Sikh with only one Hindu. Additionally, all the participants were living their lives comfortably between the two communities: British and South Asian. This may also mean that they may hold different understandings of ethnicity than other individuals, who live within the community isolated from the general society or another group of unaffiliated individuals who live within the British community and do not attend any community events.

While this does not invalidate the findings it does reduce their generalisability to others with similar circumstances. However, the notion of generalisability in a study such as this may not be possible or necessarily desirable. As Widdicombe (1995) argues, the best way of avoiding imposing categories of meaning upon others is to contextualise analysis and not to generalise from research findings.

While a notion of reliability is disputed regarding qualitative methods, Mason nonetheless outlines how the concept can be made more meaningful to this type of research. She advises 'ensuring — and demonstrating to others — that your data generation and analysis have been not only appropriate to the research questions, but also thorough, careful, honest and accurate' (Mason, 1996, p.146). I hope I have achieved this and that, despite the difficulties encountered, the approach chosen was suitable for exploring discourses of ethnicity and self-identity. Of course alternatives are always available and whereas this study uses collages and
interviews, there are many other worthwhile methods of exploring the more unformulated aspects of discursively constructing self-identity, whilst refusing any type of labelling and essentialism.

Although some ethical questions have been explored here the overarching question as to the acceptability of researching relatively powerless groups has not been addressed. As Silverman argues it is relatively easy to gain access to 'underdog groups', indeed, their accessibility 'suggests their vulnerability' (2001, p. 56). Is it justifiable as researchers to exploit such vulnerability? Possibly, as Orton and Rowlingson (2007) debate, a new research agenda is needed, one that examines construction of identity through rigorous scrutiny of stronger groups rather than the traditional focus on easily identified groups.

Reflexivity may also entail acknowledging some of the tensions inherent in the interview situation. Interviews can be seen as a practical compromise between incompatible processes, i.e. on the one hand 'experiencing' and 'telling', and on the other 'analysing' and 'categorising'. In order to try and avoid this tension, interviewers may consider restricting their questioning only to terminology used previously by the participant. One could suggest, however, that such restrictions, being 'unnatural' for the interviewer, may be difficult to apply in actual practice. The interaction is made even more difficult to interpret in that a participant "may even make an effort to speak the interviewer's 'language' as s/he sees it" (Mazeland and Have, 1996, p.88). Furthermore, the participant may not expect the interviewer to speak from their own position, i.e. that of an interested outsider.

3.8 Validity

Although discourse analysis does not accept objectivism’s scientific demands of reliability and validity, this does not mean that all demands for validity are dismissed. A common critique of qualitative research from the perspective of quantitative research is that qualitative research is less stringent and hence less valid. This is not necessarily true. Of course it is not certain that the criteria used to validate qualitative research can always determine whether the research is valid, however
this also applies to validation techniques within the natural sciences (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

Porter and Wetherell (1987) explain that in discourse analysis research the finding section of the report is a lot more than a presentation of the research findings, it constitutes part of the confirmation and validation procedures itself. The goal of my research findings chapter is to present analysis and interpretations in such a way that the reader will be able to assess the researcher’s observations. Thus a representative set of examples from the area of interest must be included along with detailed interpretation which links analytic claims to specific parts or aspects of the extracts. In this way, the entire reasoning process from discursive data to conclusions is documented in some detail and each reader will be given the possibility of evaluating the process, and hence can agree with the conclusions or feel that there is a ground for disagreements. In this sense discourse analysis could be more rigorous than experimental reports as it is often impossible to independently check the analysis in these cases.

One way in which the validity of a discourse analysis research can be determined is by focusing on coherence. My analytical claims will form a coherent discourse; I will leave aspects of the analysis that are not in line with the discourse analytical account to the readers to judge if it is possible to accept my analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.170).

Another way of determining validity is to evaluate the fruitfulness of the analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This method has been applied traditionally across scientific paradigms. In evaluating the fruitfulness of the analysis, the focus is on the explanatory potential of my analytical framework in the context of my research this analytical framework will help to provide new anti-essentialist explanations (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.171).
3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the process of putting together a piece of research. This process is not something that can be done by ‘slavishly following a set of edicts about what is right or wrong’ (Denscombe, 1998). When writing a research plan the researcher needs to reflect upon the variety of options and alternatives and make strategic decisions about which to choose. Each choice brings with it a set of assumptions about the social world it investigates.

There is no ‘one right’ direction to take. There are, however, some strategies, which are better suited than others for tackling specific issues. I hope I have demonstrated that I have selected the appropriate research strategies as best fit for the purpose.

This chapter has carefully described my ontological and epistemological principles and has explained these choices in great detail. Furthermore, noting the importance of reflexivity, I have provided the reader with as much information as possible on my methodological approach to collecting and handling data. This has been done in order to justify my claims that such an approach can make a significant contribution to the marketing literature.

In my methodology I try to go beyond the focus of meaning production in consumer research. The research approach cannot be seen as trying to get to a more 'authentic' underlying discourse about 'ethnicity' but rather as examining how this discourse is managed in the lives of my participants. I hope that my research can encourage further development of post-structural, anti-essentialist research methodologies. This includes giving place to multiple voices; relinquishing an expert position in relation to the participants of our research (especially the main power position —the power to interpret), use of a non-ethnographic and non-projective approach to analysing visuality in consumer research, creating awareness of the temporality of research findings, searching for new ways to understand consumers as those who are continuously negotiating entities and looking for new ways to construct their lives.
3.9.1 **Summary of methodological choices**

- Research approach: Deconstructive discourse analysis
- Sampling: Purposive, snowball technique
- Method: Participatory research
- Research tools: Collages: self-identity, shopping experience
  
  Interview: conversational interview (narrative)
- Data analysis: Thematic analysis
Chapter Four - Findings

The structure of this chapter will follow Porter and Wetherell’s (1987) suggestion that the findings section of a discursive research report is a lot more than a presentation of the research findings; it constitutes part of the confirmation and validation procedures itself. Therefore this chapter will present the analysis in such a way that the reader will be able to assess the researcher’s claims and observations.

This thesis makes a claim that the marketing concept and segmentation strategy is essentialist because it assumes that every consumer (or group of consumers) can be identified by a fixed set of attributes (e.g. age, gender, race, social economic class, lifestyle, type of personality etc.). I argue here that common forms do not necessarily generate common meanings (Cohen, 1994). Therefore, I will try to demonstrate in this chapter that the description of individuals in terms of their social category must be misleading.

The following sections will explore the ways individuals who are the second and third generation of South Asian families in England perceive and describe their self-identity. To be able to answer this question I would like to explore what are the social and cultural resources the participants go to find inspiration when they construct their self-identity. Do these individuals perceive the messages they get from the different cultural circles (religious, ethnic, national, global, life styles etc.) as contradictory? If so, how do they deal with these contradictions?

The analysis of these issues is organised into four major sections. In the first section I will describe my conceptualisation of the anti-essentialist approach to segmentation and social identity. The second section will focus on the construction of South Asian discourses. The third section contains a discussion on the narratives given and discourses drawn upon by the participants when discussing their British identity. The fourth section considers how the participants position themselves between Western/British identity and South Asian identity and how they relate to the multiplicity of discursive positions available to them.
4.0 Introduction

The first half of the 20th century has seen managers in the industrialized economies of the western world, and especially of Britain and the USA, seeking to rationalize production processes in order to be able to increase efficiency and productivity through mass production. These attempts have largely looked internally within the organisation for improvement and thereby managers learned how to improve the quality of both their organisation's products and the internal operations processes (Garvin, 1983; Leonard and Sasser, 1982). Unfortunately, the experience was mixed as to whether these tools have delivered on their promises. The way organisations work may have changed but the changes still did not have the desired impact on profit (Hall, Rosenthal and Wade, 1993; Butz and Goodstein, 1996; Woodruff and Gardial 1996). Gradually, organisations have turned more of their attention outward to markets and customers and re-oriented their strategy toward superior customer value delivery (Band, 1991; Day, 1990; Gale, 1994; Naumann, 1995).

This change was marked by the shift of marketing attention from mass markets to differentiated markets (for example Kotler, 1972). The main assumption of the differentiation strategy is that through market segmentation the organisation can provide higher value to customers by creating a marketing mix that addresses the specific needs and concerns of the selected segment. Rooted in economic terms, the company tries to create monopolistic or oligopolistic market conditions through the utilisation of various curves of demand for a specific product category (Ferstman and Muller, 1993). This is an expanded application of the microeconomic theory of price discrimination where the firm ‘seeks to realise the highest price that each segment is willing to pay’ (Wilkie, 1990, p. 98).

Smith (1956) recognises that the idea of market segmentation involves viewing a heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogeneous markets. By offering more precise satisfaction of consumer varying wants marketers could expect the end result to bring greater marketing success than they could achieve by treating all customers as a single undifferentiated mass. Smith (1956, p.6) explains: ‘Variation in demands of individual consumers are minimised or brought into line by means of
effective use of appealing product claims designed to make a satisfactory volume of demand convergence upon the product to product line being promoted’ (Smith, 1956, p.4). However, Smith did not explain what the factors that create this convergence of individual consumers’ demands upon a single offering. Smith’s work (1956) and the work of McCarthy (1964) and Kottler (1972) that followed his work did not offer explanation how a heterogenic collection of individual consumers’ needs and desires can be satisfied by a single market offering.

Arvidsson (2006) suggests that the answer to this question is a matter of putting to work the capacity of the consumer to produce a common social world through processes of communication and interaction. This capacity to produce a common social world is ‘empowered and programmed to unfold in ways that create the measurable kinds of attention and affect that underpin the commercial values of brands’ (Arvidsson, 2006, p.9). Appadurai (1994, p.77) explains that goods and brands are unanimated and only acquire significance and life, through human exchange. Value is not inherent in goods, but added through exchange, representing the sacrifice that one makes to obtain another item that will fulfil his or her needs and desires. Penaloza and Venkatesh (2006) and other scholars from the CCT group (e.g. Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003; Belk et al. 1988; Grayson and Shulman, 2000; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Joy and Sherry, 2003; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988) claim that consumers’ understanding of these perceived benefits is based on their perception of the meanings that are attached to the products or brands. These meanings are determined by a system of cultural values and these values influence consumers’ choice.

Elliot (1997, p.131) explains that the functions of these symbolic meanings of products operate in two different directions, outward in constructing the social world through social symbolism, and inward towards constructing our self-identity through self-symbolism. As the self is embedded in social practices, one’s self-identity must be validated through social interaction. These values and meanings are important to consumers because they help consumers to categorise themselves in society and reflect her/his desirable connections with others (Kleine et al., 1995;
Belk, 1988). Grant McCracken (1986, p.73) emphasises the importance of these categories: ‘These categories will determine how this world will be segmented into discrete, intelligible parcels and how these parcels will be organised into a larger coherent system’. This is the rational of the segmentation strategy that claims that, because goods mark out social categories, they can be used to discriminate ranks and values, identities and memberships.

In the literature review I have explained that shared meanings of brands and goods are based on value consensus (Parsons, 1951). That is they are based on agreements about attitudes and beliefs. Value consensus provides a basis for order in society; if members of society are committed to the same values, they will tend to share a common identity and meanings, which provides a basis for unity and cooperation (Andersen and Taylor, 2004).

Having attributed such importance to value consensus, many scholars (for example Parsons, 1951) suggest the centrality of the socialisation process for the creation and maintenance of value consensus. Within the field of marketing Moschis and Churchill (1978) have developed a model of consumer socialisation (illustration see fig. 4.1), which encompasses both social learning and cognitive development theory. The model suggests that ‘social structural variables’ such as gender, social class and ethnicity serve as socialisation agents to help the individuals to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace. Socialisation agents are the people and institutions that have great influence on the consumer and are actively involved in the socialisation process (Moschis and Churchill, 1978).
McCracken (1988) also emphasises the importance of the socialisation process. He explains that social meanings that are constituted in the cultural system are moving into goods via socialisation agents; eventually meaning moves from goods to the individual thus helping the consumer to visualise her/himself according to the imagined possibilities of the self.

According to this claim, the participants’ identity is not self-generating or internal to the self but is cultural ‘all the way down’ because it is constituted through the process of socialisation. Consumers have the power to reflect on the social categories that construct their self-identity but not the ability to shape these categories, or in Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 963) words: ‘An individual is free to create any variety of selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular socio-cultural context and from the models, images and symbols provided by the media and by individual’s immediate social experiences’.
In my research I take an anti-essentialist position (Hall, 1996) regarding consumer identity. I claim that consumer identity is not a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being but is a process of becoming. In Hall’s (1994, p.223) words: ‘There is no essence of identity to be discovered; rather, cultural identity is continually being produced within the vectors of similarity and difference’. Cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting set of subject positions. Further, the points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating. The meaning of being American, British, Asian, masculine and so forth, are subject to continual change. Their meaning is never finished or completed. Identity then becomes a ‘cut’ or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible.

This anti-essentialist position does not mean that we cannot speak of identity. Rather, it points us to the political nature of identity as a ‘production’. An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, the question of who one is remains an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices and, within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives. These stories are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgments made relevant and the subject positions made available within them.

Persons as speakers acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying story lines are taken up. Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradict other possible selves located in different story lines. Like the flux of past events, conceptions people have about themselves are disjointed until and unless
they are located in a story. Since many stories can be told, even of the same event, we each have many possible coherent selves.

Davies and Harre (1990) explain that in making choices between contradictory demands there is a complex weaving together of the positions and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions. Such positions are available within any discourse and have developed as a result of personal experiences. They explain that we use stories to make sense of our choices between available positions and discourses.

This description of subjectivity is very different from the segmentation approach, which views consumers as a mass manipulated by its cultural category. Common forms do not necessarily generate common meanings (Cohen, 1994); therefore, the description and explanation of individuals in terms of their group or categories must be misleading. Individuals and society are too complex and too subtle to be reconciled satisfactorily in so mechanical a fashion. We should not take belonging or social membership for granted. The trouble with the marketing concept and its interpretivist development is that it treats society, or community, as an ontology which somehow becomes independent of its own members and assumes that the self is required to adjust to it.

The problem with the essentialist marketing conceptualisation of segmentation is that it assumes that there is a shared consumer experience that necessarily leads to a common meaning of brands and similar decision-making processes. As I have argued in the introduction, meanings or experiences are not experienced as fixed, clear or constant through time. The segmentation concept is in doubt because there is no primary source of meaning and no self-present transparent meaning that can fix the relation between signifiers and signified in a consumers’ language.

There have been significant cultural changes in contemporary society. Williams (1981) identifies these social and cultural changes as a ‘structure of feeling’ and describes this change in cultural practices as: “a sense of the fragmentary,
ambiguous and uncertain nature of living, an awareness of the centrality of contingency, a recognition of cultural difference and acceleration in the pace of living” (quoted in Barker 2003, p. 207). Consequently, factors that traditionally serve as a basis for segmentation, such as class, ethnicity, and gender play less of a role in the determination of identity than they did. The boundaries between social groups are being eroded. Of this Firat and Venkatesh (1995, p.123) say: ‘Cultural enclaves no longer run in parallel, but cut across one another in ever changing patterns’.

In this research I would like to suggest that using segmentation strategies that try to constrain or anchor consumers to a consistent and stable social or cultural category with a fixed set of meanings and values is likely to lead to marketing failure. It will be futile to try to find consistent, centred, or stable self-perceptions in current markets. Rather, within each individual’s life circumstances there will be several self-narratives that a single consumer may subscribe to at different times, under different circumstances. Fragmented markets and fragmented experiences signal both the increasing possibility (maybe necessity) and the growing consumer desire, for fluid movement among different experiences, images and meanings in and through life. Therefore, the marketer’s purpose will increasingly be to understand the elements of the types of images represented.

Current marketing literature on ethnicity assumes that if members of society belong to the same community they will be committed to the same values; consequently, they will tend to share a common identity and meanings (Andersen and Taylor, 2004), which provide a basis for targeting and positioning strategies. To evaluate this assumption my research has studied the ways British South Asian individuals perceive and describe their self-identity.

To be able to answer this question I have explored what the social and cultural resources are that are used by the participants to find inspiration when they construct their self-identity. Do these individuals perceive the messages they get from the different cultural circles (e.g. religious, ethnic, national, global, life styles) as contradictory? If so, how do they deal with these contradictions? Finally, I would like
to find out what, if any, place brands, possessions and commercial messages hold in the process of self-identity construction for these individuals? Consumer behaviour according to the marketing concept is the result of socialisation and value consensus. To evaluate this essentialist, structuralist perception of self-identity I have explored the ways they negotiate their agency within different cultural and social categories.

I treat ethnicity, religion and nationality as ‘categories of practice’ (Bourdieu, 1990), which means categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors. ‘Identity’ too is treated as a category of practice and the focus of my research is on the way the participants use identity in their everyday settings to make sense of themselves, their activities, what they share with others, and how they differ from them.

4.2 Alternative conceptualisation to the concept of ‘identity’

Given the great range and heterogeneity of the work done on ‘identity’ it would be fruitless to look for a single substitute, for such a term would be as overburdened as identity itself. Rather, I prefer to unbundle the thick tangle of meanings that have accumulated around the term ‘identity’ and to identify a number processes surrounding it. In my discussion I take inspiration from the work of Brubaker et al. (2000) and look at the construction of the self through three main complementing processes: identification, self-understanding and commonality.

4.2.1 Identification

In the identification process the individuals try to characterises themselves, to locate themselves in relation to known others, to situate themselves in a public narrative, to place themselves in a social or cultural category. This positioning happens in a number of different contexts and continuously changes. The current life style of many individuals who live in post-industrial societies offers many opportunities for interactions and identifications with others some of them from immediately proximate circles and some of them less personally known. How the person
identifies him/herself and how others identify them may vary greatly from context to context. Identification is fundamentally a situational and contextual process.

Hall (2000) explains that such identification will not necessarily result in internal sameness with the identified subject. Identification of oneself and of others is part of social life; however it is not identity in the strong sense, the result of the bounded ‘groupness’ that entrepreneurs of modernity seek to achieve. Self-identification takes place in dialectical interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge (Berger 1970).

4.2.2 Self-understanding and social location

When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom.

From: To Have Done with the Judgment of God (Antonin Artaud, 1976)

The concept of ‘self-understanding’ as presented in this research is different than the understanding of the self as a homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity. This essentialist self is the result of the socialisation process into a well-defined society with a clear value consensus (this concept has been discussed extensively in the literature review (in chapter 2). However, in line with Kogler (2002) I would like to claim that, socialisation is an ambiguous process: ‘Even if the symbolic meanings often demarcate relatively rigid boundaries for individual self-expression; yet the situated self-understanding is still never fully delineated by the socio-symbolic logic of identification’ (Kogler, 2002, p.1). If we want to relate symbolic identification to the reflexive agent, we should rather emphasise that the self-understanding of the person can never be fully inscribed into a total description. This is because the act of self-understanding, or self-reflection, is dependent on the spontaneous act of the person her/himself, and can thus never be limited by a general classification.
The structural linguistic theory of Saussure can serve as a point of reference to explain this claim. In his book ‘*Course in General Linguistics*’ (1916), Saussure portrayed a linguistic structure as a system of difference where every sign gets its meaning from its relational position vis-à-vis other signs (for example I’m British South Asian because I’m not British White). In such a system meaning is only constituted through difference and every sign becomes non-essential in character, but on the other hand, the meaning of the system itself becomes essential; something is in itself as it is not standing in relation to anything at all. The relational positions of the included signs thus become fixed.

This conceptualisation is criticised by scholars such as Ernesto Laclau (Laclau, 1990, 1996, 2005), Jacques Derrida (1982) and Umberto Eco (1997), who explicitly address the absence of central structure in semantic systems and at the same time stress its strategic position in the process of meaning-making. Laclau situates this absence in social reality, or re-affirms it in the central, strategic position in the process of identity formation.

In his books ‘The impossibility of society’ (1990) and ‘Why do empty signifiers matter to identity formation’ (1996), Laclau agrees that social identities are constructed differentially, i.e. the existence of externality—or of the ‘Other’—is crucial to their establishment. The ‘Other’, however, cannot be constructed as purely external to the desired identity, because then it would not be significantly related to it; it would become ‘just another difference’. It must, therefore, be based on something that belongs to the domain demanding identification, but one which is excluded from the task. ‘The only possibility of having a true outside’, says Laclau: ‘is not simply one more, neutral element but an excluded one, something that the totality expels from itself in order to constitute itself’ (Laclau, 1996 p. 70).

As a result of such exclusion, all other differences in a way lose their significance against the difference of the excluded. This creates both a chance for, and a problem with their identity. Their mutual differences lose some of their defining power, and at the same time there appears a possibility of a move towards the ‘impossible totality’. ‘This totality is an object which is both impossible and necessary.
Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity’ (Laclau, DATE, p. 70).

Totality can find only one way of being discursively represented — when one of the particular differences ‘assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality’ (Laclau, DATE, p. 70). The totalising task may be performed only when hegemony operates through empty signifiers, that is, when it is deprived of concrete referential meaning. Notions like “South Asian”, “Islam” or “British”, used as labels for broad social/political identities, cannot have clear conceptual definitions. Otherwise they would collapse into “differences”, one of the many in the chains of equivalence, deprived of unifying power. This is because society is not determined by a single instance in any positive way. Laclau uses the term ‘over-determination’, of a multiplicity of determining forces, ‘none of which is able to define the whole of the social’ (Laclau, 1990); such representations cannot have conceptual form, they will always elude any attempts at definition. Therefore the “emptiness” of the totalising signifier demands additional instances that make it work.

In ‘New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time’ Laclau (1990) discusses another important topic — the issue of subjectivity. The subject has to be analysed in the context of discursive production of objectivity. As there are numerous discourses, representing given particularities, which claim their rights to construe the social, the subject has to be considered within that network of determination. However, Laclau refuses to see the subject as merely a locus, or a position within the discourse. He maintains instead that the subject is situated in between discursive practices. None of them is capable of identifying the subject “totally” therefore the subject appears as an empty space between articulations. It has to use discursive resources to identify him / herself, but none of these is sufficient for the purpose. Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “body without organs” is a similar construction (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004)
4.2.3 Commonality, connectedness, groupness

One particular form of self-understanding is the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity with fellow group members and felt difference from, or even antipathy to, specified outsiders. This conceptualisation can be seen in structuralist discussions on race, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, gender, and other phenomena that are described as involving collective identities.

The idea of a bounded community appears problematic within the context of an increasingly globalised world. Particularly, it is the notion of boundedness which current processes of globalisation put into question (Tambakaki, 2006). Boundary drawings of community become increasingly undermined by the intensification and multiplication of border crossing, interactions, and networks. Consequently the notion of community itself raises questions. To perceive individual as a part of community we need to be able to locate her/him within a collectivity, the individual must have a 'we consciousness'. this perception of homogenic, and bounded community appears, icon testable as an idea and perhaps even outdated. It seems contestable simply because the borders that holds the community together seems increasingly difficult to maintain.

Communities fundamentally rest on and presuppose collective identification and membership: who has a part and who does not, who participates in the affairs of the community and who does not. They therefore presuppose boundaries or frontiers of some sort thus the earlier association of the notion of bounded community. Collectivities draw boundaries or frontiers in one and the same process: that of defining and separating themselves from others. This implies that collective identification and membership (membership in and identification with the 'common') necessarily involves distinguishing a 'them', a difference which both conditions the emergence of the collectivity and concretises its commonality (Laclau and Mouffe (1985)).
Within the context of an increasing global community, and of a borderless community, I will explore the way the participants conceptualise their collectivity, or in Mouffe’s (2001) words- their ‘we consciousness’. Rather than stirring all self-understandings based on race, religion, ethnicity and so on into a great conceptual melting pot of identity I will use more differentiated analytical language. Terms such as commonality, connectedness, and groupness could be usefully employed here in place of the all-purpose identity. Commonality denotes the sharing of some common attributes; connectedness the relational ties that link people. Neither commonality nor connectedness alone engenders groupness- the sense of belonging to a distinctively bounded group.

The varieties of sources of identification which animate and ground identity construction are immensely diverse. But which identity or identities are most important? Can divergent identities be reconciled? And how do these identities affect our understanding of, and engagement with, the world? Each of us on a daily basis, both consciously and unconsciously, draws upon, expresses, and mediates between multiple discourses and self-narrative. And as our sphere of social interaction expands, we tend to subsume portions of how we define ourselves and seek to integrate into a wider domain of human experience. This often requires us to scrutinize and even resist particular interpretations of allegiance that may have a claim on us.

The rest of this chapter, therefore, facilitates an understanding of the intricate negotiation between the cultural categories of ethnicity, nationality and religion. I deconstruct the discourses and narratives that are included in these categories. Participants’ narratives not only provide insight into their social and psychological worlds, but can be a good starting point for further exploration into the interconnections between cultural categories in the globalised cultural environment. They can help us understand the self-identity construction of any individual, resident of our dynamic modern world.
4.3 South Asian identity

In their conversations about their South Asian identity the participants express beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the narrative shifts and different positions within varying story lines are taken up. Many of these selves were internally contradictory or contradict other possible selves located within South Asian identity discourses.

Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) offer a relevant view to understanding these findings. They explain that the conceptions people have about themselves are disjointed until, and unless, they are located in a narrative. Since many stories can be told, even of the same event, each one of the participants has many possible self-descriptions of her/his ethnic identity. In making choices between these contradictory stories the participants weave together parts of different positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions).

This description is different than the view of other writers (e.g. Barth, 1969; Rossiter and Chan, 1998; Tajfel, 1981) who claim that ‘ethnicity’ is a process of self-identification whereby individuals define themselves and others into specific groups using ‘ethnic’ labels. At the individual level, the process of self-identification as an ‘ethnic individual’ is part of one’s self-concept which is based on his or her understanding of membership in a social or cultural group(s) together with the emotional significance and value that is attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981). In other words, a person’s ethnic identity involves one’s sense of belonging to a group, as well as the feelings that are attached to it. For Maffesoli (1996, p.16), what unites an individual with the community is the ‘aesthetic experience’, that is, the ability to feel emotions together with others in the community and to share the same character. Stayman and Deshpande (1989) suggest that these emotions affect how strongly one identifies with that group in a particular situation. According to this view, ‘ethnicity is not just who one is, but how one feels in and about a particular situation’ (Stayman and Deshpande, 1989, p. 361).
To view the members of the South Asian community in Britain as such is based on the notion of social boundaries. In using the term social boundaries, I am drawing on Barth’s work on ‘ethnicity’ (1969). Barth argues that ethnic groups should not be defined by reference to any objective classification or set of cultural features, but that analysts must recognise that in any situation the actors themselves collectively determine which of many potentially significant cultural differences between groups provide the grounds of ethnic distinctiveness. Hence, the term social boundaries can be used to refer to those aspects of the lives of members of a given social group that they themselves and/or others recognise as differentiating them from non-members of the group.

However, in the contemporary marketplace, the traditional bonds of community are gradually eroded and there is a shift towards a more abstract and individualised society (Bauman, 1998; Firat and Schultz, 1997; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Fischler, 1980; Mennell, 1985). Consequently, Bouchet (1995) argued that ethnicity is like a bricolage whereby one builds self-identity on the basis of heterogeneous elements taken from a diversity of cultural representations and practices. Membership of such a community transcends traditional cultural, national and race barriers – any one sharing the same space and a common sentiment can join a community, which has a less articulated but still differentiated form.

‘Ethnicity’ in such a context becomes an image and a style that one can conveniently choose and adopt. Recently, Oswald (1999, p. 304) also has argued that ‘in consumer culture, ethnicity can be bought, sold and worn like a loose garment’. In her study of ethnic minority consumers in the USA, Oswald emphasised ‘the interdependence between consumption and ethnicity as moments in the ongoing construction of personal and social identity’ (1999, p. 304). She demonstrated how a consumer’s personal and social identity, symbolised in the pronoun “I” was ‘constantly pulled in several directions at once, including class, race, and ethnic identification’ (Oswald, 1999, p. 307). Hall (1992) defines this type of ethnicity the ‘New Diasporas’ and Brah (1996) terms them ‘diasporic identities’.
These identities described by Hall and Brah are identities that cut across and displace national boundaries, creating new forms of belonging and challenging the idea of fixing identities in relation to place. For Hall (1992a, p. 310), ‘diasporic’ identifications are about living ‘in translation.’ He argues that individuals ‘must learn to inhabit two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them’. Such ‘cultures of hybridity’ (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1992) are often celebrated in cultural forms such as music (e.g. bhangra), films (e.g. Bollywood) or literature (Rushdie, 1991; Sharma, Hutnyk, and Sharma, 1996). Yet it is also important to ground these ideas about new cultural identities within the everyday lives of individuals (Alexander, 1996; Eade, 1997; Gillespie, 1995).

The findings of my research support Hutnik’s criticism (1986, p. 165) of Barth’s focus upon ‘a system of dichotomization’. In her work Hutnik points out that patterns of identification are likely to be more complex than Barth’s description, since most individuals position themselves in relation to several kinds of social boundaries. The participants express their ethnicity in ways which enable them to mix diverse social and cultural influences and elements. That is, it is widely accepted that if one is Asian and if one is proud of her or his Asian ethnicity, this does not mean that it is necessary to seek to maintain a social distance between themselves and members of other groups. The ethnic boundaries, therefore, are increasingly easy to cross in most social situations, and do not act to insulate or isolate the ethnic minority from the diverse influences of wider society.

Thus, for example, many of the participants emphasised the fact that they are ‘Asian’, but also that they are British. Many regard India or Pakistan as an exciting and interesting place to go on holiday and somewhere with which they have close ties, but, at the same time, feel strongly that Britain is the country in which they are most comfortable and at home. Many of the young people have large numbers of South Asian friends with whom they have a level of mutual understanding which is difficult to reach with white or Afro-Caribbean friends; but, nevertheless, they enjoy socialising in mixed friendship groups. Many of them tend to use Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi when conversing with their parents, but almost invariably use English when talking to members of their own generation. Many find Indian music and, styles of
dress appealing and interesting but feel that an interest in such aspects of South Asian culture by no means precludes a liking for what are perceived as 'British' or 'Western' or other 'ethnic' alternatives.

4.3.1 Traditionalist versus ‘the Rebel’

Roger Ballard (1989) claims that if we want to understand British South Asian communities we need to trace them back to their historical and geographical roots. He explains that early South Asian migrants came typically from peasant families with limited economic resources, but a multiplicity of sons. In such situation one or more sons might be sent abroad, primarily to restore and advance the family’s collective fortunes. Ballard describes this: ‘Overseas earnings could be used to redeem mortgaged land as well as to buy more, to provide sisters with dowries, to build new houses and to purchase agricultural implements’ (Ballard, 1989, p.7).

More recently this immigration trend has tended to fuel itself as increasing numbers of families sent sons abroad.

On arrival in Britain few migrants expected their visit to last long, but most have stayed much longer than they intended. A high income always tempted them to stay on and save a little more, added to which migrants soon found themselves caught up in networks of obligations within the communities which they rapidly established. As these ethnic settlements have developed the men have felt that they could safely bring their wives and children to join them.

Once the family arrived, the immigrants’ lifestyles in Britain began to be transformed. In the beginning, when saving was the main goal, a group of men would often rent a large house, share household tasks and expenses between themselves, and maximise their savings by living in basic conditions (Khan, 1979). With the arrival of wives and children there was a move to smaller, better quality houses and an improvement in living standards. As settlements grew in size, so each ethnic community has become an arena for status competition in its own right. Families have begun to outbid each other in the scale and style of luxury goods
consumption and the performance of traditional rituals (Ballard, 1989). Izzat\(^1\) was at stake, and it has become imperative for every family to participate in the game of status competition if they do not wish to fall behind (Khan, 1979). The consequent necessity for every family member to maintain an impeccable and honourable reputation acts as a constraint on everyone’s behaviour.

Most of the migrants have made great efforts to maintain the unity of their families, both because this proved an excellent way of coping with their economic circumstances, and also because this was perceived as the ‘most effective strategy against the corrosive influence of British culture’ (Ballard, 1979, p.17). British society was very attractive economically but perceived by them as lacking any moral code. Above all the ideas of honour and family loyalty seemed to be entirely absent. The main concern for these families was to make sure their children would not be affected by British cultural values. Consequently they have gone on to assume that any deviation from the ideal norms they brought from home must be the first step on the slippery slope towards total assimilation. The slightest lapse seems to indicate total disloyalty.

Following this perception we could see the participants positioning themselves between two discourses that could be taken to be ‘British Asian’. The ‘traditionalist’ was associated with traditional discourses that dictated how they should look and behave (see fig. 4.2).

\(^1\) Definition of IZZAT: Personal dignity or respect: honour. Power to command admiration: prestige. Origin of IZZAT: in Hindi izzat or izzah means glory (Merriam- Webster dictionary 2011)
In contrast, ‘the rebel’ is the individual who disassociates her/himself from traditional Asian discourse and deliberately adopts and pursues identity or behaviour which takes them away from this traditional position and closer to the Western or British discourses as they perceive them.

Nisha offers a description of such a rebel when she talks about her British-Indian friend who has adopted a ‘Greb’² life style:

² A Greb is the alternative, in the UK, to a Goth, only slightly more active in the sense that they like the new age punk and metal music and dress more modern instead of pale vampires. Grebs are mostly recognised for piercings, long hair, hoodies and black clothing with spikes and chains (Urban Dictionary 2011)
NC I’ve got one friend that went to sixth form with me and I’ve known in Punjabi school as well, but she’s what they call a ‘Greb’ you know Greb when they wear black make up black clothes

Q Oh yeah, yeah

A Yeah but she’s Asian and she does that and there are not a lot of Asians, that do that

Q Would you like to do that as well sometimes?

A Me? No I don’t think I would do that

Q Not at all?

A I mean I get on with a lot of people like that but I don’t think I’d do that I might like some of the stuff that they wear but...

Q Would you take a bit of it, would you wear, oh whatever, black make up, or anything else?

A Maybe, yeah if they have nice eyeliner or a nice top, I might ask them where they got that from but I wouldn’t then wear their trousers or, things like that...

A ... I just take a bit out, so I don’t know it’s just, that’s just how I am when it comes to people, yeah and she’s a bit more kind of a Greb, she’s a lot more English, she knows her religion and things like that but she is very English, kind of English based and things like that, basically she’s an English person who’s brown.

Q When you say English person who is brown, do you think that she gave up her Asian identity?

A No, I just think she like the other, I don’t know If she likes to be a rebel cos her parents are quite strict, but you know she just doesn’t like that side to it she doesn’t like maybe the typical Asian (Nisha p.26 609-615)

These two opposing identities were used by the participants to illustrate the ways they perceived it was possible to live an ethnic identity in practice. The British Asian individual could be either traditional or a rebel. ‘Traditional’ was associated with strict adherence to appropriately traditional ways of being ethnic while the ‘rebels’ disassociate themselves from tradition and adopt hyper-British culture.

There was a contrast between these master identities and the reality they live. None of the participants could position themselves solely within the categories they had described. Sonia and Anissa considered themselves to be traditionalists to a certain extent. Sanita and Asim viewed themselves as far from the traditionalist position (what other participants might call the rebel) most of the time. The remaining participants felt they are neither, but all of them drew on discourses from both Asian and British cultures at different times. The interviews showed that the concept of
hyper-identities is a simplistic concept and one that represented a straightforward choice between two pathways. Their lived realities were completely different and involved a complex negotiation between identities to suit the context they were in.

The participants identified ‘traditionalist’ hyper-identity as someone who is fully committed to religion and acts within its constraints, wear only traditional clothing, eats Asian food, is well connected to the country of origin of the family and disconnected from British culture. Sonia and Anissa felt their identities were mostly traditionalist as they act mostly according to this description. However, despite this self-identification as a Muslim girl who is far from the discourse of British culture Anissa says: ‘I don’t think I would like to live anywhere else than England’ (542); she likes watching football games involving her local club, is keen on Hollywood films and identifies herself with the politeness of the British society and its academic excellence.

Sonia describes her disconnection from British culture: ‘I’m not what is British, I don’t see much of it’ (811-812). However at a later stage she reflects that she loves her driving, her independence and her education, things she could not have in Pakistan. It is interesting to note that when Sonia speaks about the possibility she will need to move to London for work she identifies herself as ‘northern British’ and shares the assumed dislike of northern British to the southern British:

S You see what I mean because I’m from a different area they might think that I’m a ... or something or might think differently. Because there is a conception where you are a north person, I’m a south person.
Q When you say north person you mean in Pakistan or?
A No I mean north in UK.
Q In the UK.
A In the UK. South people sometimes, they are very stereotypical. I think south people are like this is this but I don’t but southerners may think north people are like this, this. Yeah. And they talk like this and they dress like this. So they might not accept me so I have to do extra things for me to be accepted. (Sonia 307-317)

Investigation of those participants who identify themselves with the ‘rebel’ discourse and distance themselves from the traditional discourse reveal the same pattern of dialogue between conflicting discourses. For example, Asim’s collage seems to
overwhelmingly reflect the influence of British culture. There is very limited expression of Asian identity in his self-identity collage (see fig.4.3). He considers Dermot O’Leary and Jonathan Ross as inspirational figures and describes himself through his British life style: body building, clubbing and football.

**Figure 4.3 British influences on Asim**

When he describes his fantasy of his ideal wife’s look he says: ‘nice blonde hair, nice figure, she’s pretty’ (121) but then he ignores his rebellious collage and identifies a conflict saying ‘that would be the issue probably getting married because it would be religion as well... I think her lifestyle would be a lot different’ (167-170).

In another example, Sanneta perceives British culture as less intimidating and less judgmental than Indian culture. She says: ‘Most of my friends are white and not of my own religion. It just happens to be like that (137-138) ... So maybe it’s a lack of trust [in her own community] and I tend to go towards people who are more appreciative of who you are as an individual. I think people within that [Indian Sikh] culture are quite judgmental (145-147). However, later she recognises the important role of faith in her self-identity construction and she says; ‘I think Sikh is more who I am ...’ (122) and later: ‘I’m not a strong religious person but I do have respect for my faith because that’s who I am’ (126-127). Her self-identity collage reflects these conflicting voices.
In this context it will be useful to note Johal’s claim (2001) that many second and third generation British Asians adopted a ‘hyper-ethnic style’ where they embraced an exaggerated form of their parent culture, including Indian or Hindi films, listening to music from the Asian sub-continent and more. Johal explains that there is no direct link between ethnicity and religion, although many British Asians have chosen to keep the religious ideas of their parents as part of their identity. He says: ‘The holding on to such doctrines can provide a kind of 'empowerment through difference', but many second generation Asians also carefully negotiate their associations with religion. Issues such as choice of marriage partner, intra-ethnic marriage and diet (the consumption of alcohol, meat etc.) often lead to the adoption of a position of selective cultural preference’ (Johal 2001, p.5).

Clarke, Peach and Vertovec (1990) claim that in order to account for meanings, actions, and ‘contextual parameters’ among South Asian populations in Britain, a broad range of factors must be accounted for in a systematic way. The authors have proposed a number of such factors appropriate for the analysis of British South Asian populations that include: links to the homeland of parents, religion, and bonding with the British South Asian community. These factors emerge as the main themes in the conversation with the participants of my research about their South Asian identity. For example, Samera offers her view on her identity: ‘I describe my identity, like, my religion is Islam, origin is Pakistani and just things that are to do with my origin like Asian clothes, Asian food. My language Urdu’ (67-68). Anissa expresses the same perception of her self-identity in her collage:
4.3.2 **Link to the parent’s homeland**

The home life of the participants emphasised links with the country of origin of the parents (Pakistan and India in the case of this research). They travel as visitors, phone friends and relatives and take part in family events in the homeland. Each one of them manages a network of personal relationships that span two countries. These cross-border communications can influence the ways they identify their sense of self. I have tried to find out if the connection between their parents’ homeland and Britain helps them to mobilise the resources which allow them to express feelings of multiple attachment and belonging.

The findings of this research suggest that the presence of the parents’ homeland in the participants’ self-narrative might be not as dominant as some writers claim (for example Glick *et al.*, 1992; Levitt, 2001; Portes, 1997). Out of all the participants only Raswan has been in Pakistan more than three times, the majority have been there just once in early childhood (around the age of three or four years old) or for the first time when they were eighteen years old. It seems that the resources for homeland discourse are based mainly on stories they hear at home, family photos and watching television programs on Asian channels. For some such as Sanitta, the extended family is not in India anymore but spread all over the world. Consequently,
the ties to India are diminishing. Sanitta who has visited India only once in her life when she was four years old, describes the experience:

‘A I went when I was about 3 or 4 and I can’t remember it – only from what mum and dad have told me – pictures and stuff.

Q Do you have much family over there?

A No, very few. Mum’s family live in Canada. Dad’s family lives in the UK. I don’t have much family over in India’. (123-127)

Other participants act to create a presence of the homeland even when they don’t have actual contact with it. An example is Anu who visited India only three times in her early childhood. Anu has learned to speak fluent Punjabi in Sunday school and tries to create the presence of the homeland in her life in different ways:

‘A: Yeah I send them pictures, they send DVDs of weddings or any family function they have had there. I also try and go on the internet, I’m just trying to think when was the last time I, they send me clothes and thing, I send things back. I mean the music I listen to Indian music a lot. I watch the latest Indian films that have come out and things so I try and keep those roots still there even though I’m not actually visiting India. So that is definitely what I try and do even though I am over here. (201-207)

Just four of the participants gave any place to the homeland in their self-identity collage and it was small relative to other items.
It seems that this group of second and third generation Indian and Pakistani immigrants to the UK travel less frequently than their parents to the country of origin and when they visit the ties appear attenuated.

4.3.2.1 The experience of the visit in the country of origin

Most of the participants have enjoyed their visits in India, or Pakistan, from a tourist’s point of view and enjoyed the family warmth they have experienced there even more. Sumayah describes this feeling:
Yeah I have family in my age range, younger cousins, older cousins, same age and the five brothers live with their wives and their children in one huge house. There is about 25 people living there and that to me is the most secure, stable thing in the world and just to be in that environment is great. I mean I’ve got six family members at home but compared to 25 that is like five families in one. And that kind of security is immeasurable and you know what you feel, you wake up and there is three or four breakfasts cooking. I love that environment. (Sumayah 188-196)

Jaz describes the same experience of meeting family and link to the family stories she has heard at home:

It was the first time I went and it, obviously I knew nothing about India, I didn’t know, just pictures and like pictures of grandparents house, where my dad grew up, I didn’t know anything about it so, and we only went for three weeks, and I really enjoyed, my mum was worried she said, Jaz you’re not going to like it because you’ve grown up here and it’s very different over there and she told me all about the culture and everything but, I, until you get there you don’t understand so. We had three weeks and, in those three weeks cos they’re still, my grandparents still have family there, so we had to go round and meet, everybody wanted to meet us, or, like … she was three years old and look she’s got, so that everybody wanted to meet my Mum and Dad and me so we had no time to go out touring. (Jaz 1000-1011)

On their visit to the homeland they were surprised to discover that the Indian and Pakistani cultures are less conservative than the way their parents have portrayed it to them at home. Ali describes his visit in Pakistan: ‘In Pakistan obviously they are not all saints they all try to go out with girls but they try to hide it. You know you go out and you say oh she’s just you know a school friend and we are just dropping her off otherwise it can be …’ (Ali 552-557).

The next part of the conversation focused on whether or not they could feel at ‘home’ in their parents’ country of origin and how their travel experiences influenced their feeling of attachment to their homeland after the trip. Findings showed that together with the sense of belonging, there was a sense of alienation.

Some of the participants describe a feeling of difference when they arrived to their country of origin. The language barriers and cultural differences made them feel like outsiders. For example Nisha describes her difficulties with the language while visiting the market with her relatives: ‘I mean I speak Punjabi but it’s probably not as
fluent as some people there so, when I speak Punjabi they probably can tell from there, even if I wore an Asian outfit anyway so no point’ (Nisha 799-802).

Some explained that they could not feel at home because the locals treat them as British. Anissa describes her experience: ‘I didn’t feel as though I was going back home because in a same way like a lot of British Pakistanis I think they don’t know their own identity. When you go to Pakistan they don’t see you as Pakistanis they see you as British’ (Anissa 526-528).

However, some of the participants said that while the locals made them welcomed and accepted, it was hard for them to find a sense of belonging internally and they felt more connected to Britain. Jaz describes her feelings.

Yeah, it was confusing, because people used to tell me that oh this is where you were born, and, where are you going to get married are you going to come back here and get married, and I was like, no, I’m going to get married in England. I’m English and I’m British so it’s, no I won’t, so I found it really confusing because they saw me as one of their own, I am, you know they are my family but I didn’t feel like, I felt like my home was here [in England] though. (Jaz 1024-1029)

Nisha even goes further and exaggerate her British identity during the visit. As she describes ‘in India when I went there, I liked to have a big bag, that I’d have my phone, I’d have two phones on me, I don’t know why, I have them in India I have them and people see you take two phones out and things like that and they do think it’s quite strange ... . They probably think that you’re rich ... yeah, yeah, English rich girl (Nisha 804-811).

They felt even more like outsiders in the homeland of their parents when they encountered the different political culture. Jaz, Samera, and Anissa all complained about the conservative and discriminating attitude of men in India and Pakistan toward women. Jaz explains:
I don’t feel like I could live there, because it was, another reason was, because of like women and how they’re treated, and how it’s so separate ... the men can do whatever they want but the women can’t. And it was very, women were very, they were like being preyed [upon] in India, it was very, very interesting ... . It’s not safe, it’s not safe like women, women if they go past a group of boys you can just see the fear in their eye, fear in, you can just see the fear because they’ll walk past and put their head down and carry on walking really really fast ... . (Jaz 1033-1045)

Ali describes his shock at the level of corruption he has seen on his visit to Pakistan: ‘the police out there sometimes are really corrupted, really, really corrupted and I see, this guy [the policeman] asked me to pay him 500 rupees. I said no and he gave me a ticket. That got me so mad that I nearly ran him over’ (Ali 559-563).

Anissa summarises this cultural gap in a clear way: ‘I do like Pakistan, like the country I like Pakistan in the same way I like England but I don’t generally like the people sometimes, the way they are (Anissa 579-580).

Feelings of alienation and belonging might have been perceived as two contrasting experiences. However the participants experienced both when travelling back to their country of origin.

4.3.2.2 Homeland of the parents, consumption and inspiration

There are different ways that the participants express the transnational discourses through their consumption choices. Sekhon (2007) has identified the main forms of transnational consumption: Fashion, Bollywood Films and Asian TV channels; these themes emerge in this research as well.

4.3.2.2.1 Fashion

Selecting Asian clothes is an important way in which second generation British South Asian express their transnational belonging. Fashion serves as a medium for self-expression in a way that pays tribute to the transnational flows in which they are situated.
Anu’s shopping experience collage describes this idea:

Figure 4.7 Anu’s self-expression in fashion

The participants create their own fashion styles that reflect their connection to their parents’ homeland; in this way fashion serves as a cultural tool for building bridges across national boundaries and enables them to situate themselves between these boundaries.

Anu says: ‘Yeah this is my normal Top Shop, Miss Selfridge type clothes yeah. I only wear traditional outfits to weddings as well. But when we do wear them we wear them full style with the big necklaces, the big earrings, the funky hairdo’ (139-142).

The participants communicate with family members in India or Pakistan to ensure they are up to date with contemporary Asian fashions and styles. Nisha describes how her frequent transnational communications provide the mechanisms through which she acquires information about contemporary Indian fashions:

I have my cousin in India that comes on Skype. sometimes I ask him because I’m not good like that, you can go onto some web sites and find the different things, but you don’t know if that’s been updated and things like that so I prefer to go ask my cousins ... . Yeah, he’s getting married soon so he can ask his wife to be or, cos he lives in Bombay, Bombay’s quite obviously fashionable place, so he can find out what girls wear. I’m sure he knows what girls wear there and things like that so, he can help me out. (Nisha 580-591)
Having family in India or Pakistan provides the British born Asians with a kind of ethnic fashion specialist that is unavailable to them in Britain. Through these cross-border fashion talks, the participants learn the latest styles in India or Pakistan, which they can then modify to reflect their own reality. However not all of them will relate to their parents’ homeland as a reference for a fashion choice. For example, Samera says ‘No I think England that’s what influences me more in what I choose to wear. Because in England, like, I wear trousers, jeans, skirts but in Pakistan I wouldn’t wear because no one else would be wearing it, I would be like the odd one out’ (Samera 215-218).

Through their transnational mixing of styles, the participants negotiate the meanings associated with fashions. Fashion serves as a signifier for self-expression and helps them to position themselves between the discourses of the British life and the homeland of the parents (Purkayastha, 2005).

4.3.2.2.2 Bollywood film and Asian TV channels

Movies, especially those made by Bollywood, form the bridge between country of origin and fashion. Based on her work on Indian youth in Britain, Gillespie (1995) has argued that second generation youth in London sort out their ethnic identity in relation to these movies. The findings of my research support Gillespie’s conclusions. For example, Asim, a British Pakistani participant says:

I speak Urdu at home yeah. That’s just between my parents. But because I’ve not been to Pakistan, the last time I was about three years old. So I’ve not really seen my relatives over there as much ... so I can imagine how the country looks like because I do see Asian channels, Pakistani channels that come through cable. I get an idea of how the country is (Asim 701-708).

Movies certainly offer the participants a common theme for conversations with parents and friends. Mirza says: ‘With my family I watch Bollywood and we’re basically, there’s quite, one or two of my friends now watch quite a lot of Bollywood as well so we just, we just watch a lot of Bollywood and I’m listening to Asian music as it is so it’s a great influence on me (Mirza 497-502).
Only one participant chose an Indian celebrity as an inspiring character in his self-identity collage. All other participants chose British or global celebrities.

A: My favourite Bollywood actor is Akshay Kumar. He is probably the best actor and his acting is really good.

Q: Did you choose him because of the characters he acts in films or his off-screen character?

A: Yeah his character, there was a documentary on him about his lifestyle. Again, he keeps his family close to him, he is a family man, he is married, he’s got a kid. He’s ... as he is when he is playing his roles. That’s not really him that’s the roles he has to play. ...’. (Asim 327)

Sirgy et al. (1982) explain that when consumers evaluate a product or brand they employ a ‘self-verification’ strategy. This means that consumers seek and interpret situations and behavioural strategies that match their present self-conceptions. Sirgy explains that consumers avoid situations and behaviours that derive contradictory information to their own self-perceptions and will look for more self-confirmatory evidence than actually exists. This looks to be the case in Asim’s evaluation of his chosen celebrity. He continues and says: ‘... And when they were basically following him around on his day in his life what he does daily and he’s not too different from me or from the average person. So yeah. Until they’ve done a documentary on them you can’t see what type of people they are’ (Asim 718-727).

In conclusion, it seems that consumption of brands, products and services from the country of origin does not reflect the feelings of alienation they have expressed when discussing the homeland of their parents.

4.3.3 Religion

This section explores the process of religious identity formation and investigates the emergence of religion as one of the most important sources of personal and social identity for this group of second and third generation British Asians. Of the 13 individuals interviewed for this study, eight were born into Muslim families, four were Sikh and two Hindu. Drawing on data gathered through self-identity collages and interviews with the participants this research illustrates how religious identity development is variable rather than static.
All the participants had parents who were born and raised in India or Pakistan where substantial portions of public social life were tied to their religion. These parents have immigrated to the United Kingdom during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Their children, who were born in the United Kingdom, came to recognise that they were part of a small, highly visible religious minority in British society. Anissa, one of the Muslim participants describes this feeling.

A: You do have to like prove yourself more because when you are going for a job interview, before I go to a job interview you will just think are they going to see the appearance before they actually start asking any question or something ...
O: Did you have any problems when you go to Debenhams with your hijab?
A: No, but I did feel awkward because I have been to Debenhams before and I never really see any girls with hijab working there’ (Anissa 446-472).

As they matured, it became increasingly important for them to maintain their religious identity. Asim, a Muslim man describes this: ‘Part of being a strong person is not letting go of your values. If you let go of your values that shows that you are changing. And if you are changing you’ll change your personality to best fit someone else and if you do this then you are not who you are, you are lying to yourself. And if you are lying to yourself then you are not taking yourself seriously. So I’m very strong on that aspect’ (Asim 988-993).

Based on the analysis of the data it appears that these British Asians try to distinguish between religion and ethnicity as a source of identity. According to this distinction, ethnicity is perceived as a matter of attachment to a set of non-religious traditions and customs that an older generation of British Asians brought with them to Britain from the Indian sub-continent. The participants mentioned a wide range of behaviours which they deem to be ‘traditional’, ‘cultural’, or ‘ethnic’ rather than religious, including practices relating to caste, dowries, arranged marriage, and marriage ceremonies. Religion, on the other hand, has a universal relevance representing a set of absolute truths. The participants position themselves in different places between the ethnic-cultural-traditional and the religious.
For example, Mirza describes how the balance has changed for him between religion and culture: ‘This basically showing [illustration below] that this is what a major part of me is now.

Figure 4.8 Religion in Mirza’s collage

‘Before I wouldn’t, there would be a major gap here and I wouldn’t, I’d probably put Bollywood TV and movies and family as my major influence. They are a positive influence as well, my family and my friends but my religion would be now is a major influence’ (Mirza 81-85).

Saneta positions herself on the ethnic-cultural side of the conversation. She feels resentment of religion and says: ‘I don’t like religious people- I think people who strongly believe in their faith should do so without being nasty to other people or forcing other people to be the same way or inflicting pain on people because they think they are supreme. So they are my negative public’ (Saneta 82-85).

We can see this tension between culture and religion in the collages of Ali, a Muslim man with Pakistani origins, who positions himself on the cultural-ethnic side and Nisha who positions herself on the side of religion.
However, it seems that for the rest of the participants the distinction between these two positions was not so clear cut. In my conversation with Samera I asked her to position herself between these two discourses and she offered me two mixed replies.

Q  Okay and what are you more do you think Pakistani or Muslim?
A  Muslim. I think in both really because your culture is what we have been bought up with really so’ (Samera 91).

But then I asked her to think about a hypothetical situation where she had to choose between the universalism of Islam and her culture

‘Q  ... you go to a holiday in Germany, you are sitting in a room with Turkish Muslim girl and Pakistani Christian girl who do you feel closer to?
A  Probably Pakistani Christian girl because Turkey is very different I think to our culture, I actually went to Turkey in October 2007 and they are very different, well I think. (Samera 96-100)

Ali provides the opposite example; he positions himself on the side of culture (see fig. 4.10). But when he describes his self-identity in the interview he says: ‘I am a Sayed Shiite. Sayed is basically to do with we come from the family of the prophet so we are Sayed’s... this is nothing to do with social it is all to do with the religious’ (Ali 202, 254).
This difficulty in defining the distinction between culture-ethnicity and religion is evident in Jaz’s discussion about her participation in Sikh religious rituals: ‘

You know if you’re baptised a Sikh, I’m not baptised and the majority of people aren’t baptised, if you’re like proper, baptised Sikh, where you go for the prayers and you do your prayers every day then, you’re not supposed to cut your hair, you’re not supposed to drink alcohol, you’re not supposed to eat meat. And you’re not supposed to cut your hair, culturally my, when I was growing up, I didn’t cut my hair until I was thirteen years old. (Jaz 524-529)

It seems that the participants struggle to find the border line between these two positions and find it confusing. Bally says: ‘I wanted to know more about my traditions; Are they culture? Are they religious? Because, there was a lot of conflicting things ... It was like there were a lot of mix and match sort of things (Bally 591-592).

The special significance of religion lies in the fact that, by and large, it is central to their sense of who they are. If they choose to identify themselves as observant Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus they affirm their belief in the religion’s teachings and regard it as something in relation to which they should orient their behaviour in all spheres of life and which, therefore, demands of them a self-conscious and explicit commitment

What is crucial here is the emphasis that the religion places upon rightful action. This focus on action means that to be devout Muslim, Sikh or Hindu one must behave in explicitly defined ways. Furthermore, their religious prescriptions for action do not relate to one specific sphere of life. Rather they involve all areas of social existence: even the mundane activities that fill a day can, indeed, be permeated with religious meanings. Thus, the social differences that distinguish the observant person from the non-observant one tend to be demonstrated in normal interaction and on an ongoing basis.

Ali describes the difference between him, as a religious person, and the others. The emphasis is on rightful action: ‘I worked in the papers round as a teenage. On the weekend’s paper round was a lot harder because you get these newspapers and
then you have to put a lot of leaflets into them and some of my friends were also doing that but what they decided to do was we had this big field near our house. They got rid of it. And I just can’t, this because I’ve not cheat or I wouldn’t do this. I can’t buy stolen good’ (Ali 347-350).

The participants found it hard to maintain this focus on rightful action and keep their modern life style. All the participants report that they find themselves negotiating all the time between their religion laws and the need to lead their lives. Mirza describes: ‘If I’ve got a lecture at 2pm and I have to pray at 2pm I will go to my lecture instead of praying. You know if I’m doing something important you need to make priorities, I do make priorities. I know I shouldn’t, I should go, but to be honest ... As another example I see probably is the Friday prayer at 1.30pm. At every minute I’m able to go to every Friday pray but I know that when it comes to work, full time work it might not come to that so I might have to sacrifice it for a little while to get by. I can’t say and make an issue and say I have to go and pray on Friday even though I should. Yeah I will try and go for the Friday prayer but if there is work or if I’m occupied or for example if I’m here and nearest mosque is 30 miles away and I’ve only got half an hour’s break I will not go 30 miles (Mirza 312-317).

Samera describes how she changes her dress style to appear a bit less religious because she wants to feel more part of the British environment she lives in: ‘Because in England like I wear trousers, jeans, skirts but in Pakistan I wouldn’t wear because no one else would be wearing it, I wouldn’t like to be, like, the odd one out. Yeah here I dress down because you have to fit in with the society so you don’t want to be the odd one out (Samera 215-219).

Research participants describe situations in which even the religious leaders themselves compromise and adapt their lifestyle. For example: Nisha describes how the family celebrate Christmas in her grandfather’s home; Nisha’s grandfather is a Hindu priest. ‘Even like Christmas, even though we don’t celebrate it for the religious purposes, Yeah we’ll have a Christmas tree when my grandparents would put one up, so we’ll go for a Christmas meal to their house and open presents and things so that’s nice ...’ (Nisha 82-86).
For the participants in this study, a significant development of their religious identity occurred in response to a crisis - the events and aftermath of 11th of September 2001 and the 7th of July 2005. Murtaza Shibli a writer in the Guardian claimed (Guardian 6/7/2010) that on the 7th of July 2005 amid the pain and anguish of London bombing, one significant narrative was lost - that of British Muslims. He claims that they became victims, both of terrorists and of ‘overzealous sections of the media, which accepted the terrorists’ definitions of Islam and imposed them blindly on Muslims communities living in the UK’. Whether we agree with Shibli or not, one thing is for certain - the life of British Muslims would never be the same. Schedule 7 of the terrorism Act 2000 gave the authorities the power to question any person, for up to nine hours, in order to determine if they were involved in terrorism. Security measures imposed by the police allowed stops in railway stations, ports and airports. The impact of these measures is felt by the individuals who are stopped, and also by those friends and family members travelling with them or awaiting their arrival. For some Muslims, these stops have become a routine part of their travel experience.

Ali, the son of a judge in the crown court of his home town and the brother of a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force offers a description of one of these experiences:

A I went to Birmingham University my first semester I didn’t have my driving licence so I always had like, well one day I had a lot of bags with me I was placing my bag in you know where the bags are in the tray and the guy on the train, the train inspector he actually asked me to open my bags.

Q Really?

A Yeah, whereas someone else who placed a bigger bag than me wasn’t asked. I wouldn’t have minded had he have done that on the platform but for him to do it on the train in front of the people I could feel that I was getting red from like you know and that’s something I didn’t particularly enjoy. So I spent six to seven hundred pounds on my driving test and my driving lessons.

Q Just because of that?

A It was one of the main reasons, it was. It was something alien to me you know to have that feeling of being, because if someone asked me I would say, I wouldn’t call myself English but I would call myself British and then I’d use the word British Pakistani. I mean the Britishness is within my culture. (Ali 520-537)
A report that has been published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (Winkler 2005, p.3) confirms that in the period after the attacks there was an increase in faith-related hate crimes across the UK. Anissa describes two situations where she was abused because of her religious appearance: ‘Yeah because when 9/11 happened I was 15. I think and me and my friends were walking through the city centre and someone shouted out Bin Laden at us’.

And then she continues: ‘Yeah it does anger you because after that a few times I have been attacked. In college when me and my friend were on a bus for about 30 minutes we were actually being abused by two white boys should I say. They were in their 20s. For about 30 – 40 minutes’. (Anissa 370-380)

Abuse was the experience of the non-Muslim participants as well: Bally describes his experience: ‘People when they are drunk, yeah, back in the day when people used to say ‘you Paki’ to be honest I’m not a Paki anyway I’m Indian. So I said that’s fair enough I’m not a Paki so it didn’t make much difference. But at the end of the day I just thought they were idiots and just thought they had nothing else’ (Bally 135-140).

Consequently, this made all British Asian minority groups and particularly British Muslim- feel vulnerable and fear for their safety. Anissa told me in the interview that her parents are so scared that they have decided to build a house in Pakistan as an escape route:

A No, my mum and dad are making a house in Pakistan. Well it’s just that uncertainty about you know you might have to go back for Pakistan.
Q Why?
A Just for circumstances. Especially now they feel a bit, after what everything is happening, after 9/11.
Q Really?
A Yeah they do feel kind of you never know they might have to pack their bags and go back so they might as well. (Anissa 300-305)
Despite this reaction, most of the participants continued to publicly affirm their religious identities.

Some of the participants described how they attempted to react to others if they found themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Many of them said that even if someone made them angry or upset, due to a negative comment, a dirty look or any other such action, they tried not to respond because they did not want to reinforce negative stereotypes about themselves or find themselves in bigger trouble.

The Muslim interviewees noted the increasing importance of positively representing Muslims and Islam to others. Because the participants believed that their religion was now viewed negatively by many of their fellow British, they felt a need to both explain and demonstrate their faith more strongly than before. Many of the participants remarked that if they could just show people what a ‘good Muslim’ and the ‘true Islam’ were, some of the stereotyping and antipathy would end. For example, Samera talks about what she would like to say to those who attack her in the street based on her Muslim religion: ‘I’d say I don’t know Bin Laden, I don’t know Sadam Hussain because there is over 1 billion Muslims in the world and I’m not accountable for everyone’s actions (Samera 385-387). Anissa talks about the misperception of Muslims by the wider community and speaks about her wish to change this perception:

I do want my neighbours...I would like them to know I am the same as them. Obviously I don’t do certain things but I’ve got this like. I go out, I do this, I study, I’m sharp, I’ve got, I watch TV, I watch TV programmes. Yeah or Eastenders or everything but I like to socialise because I think a lot of people think, I know I am using media again but media is the main source of information that people get. But I think a lot of media thinks that Asian people are probably, they don’t socialise, or Muslims they haven’t got a sense of humour. They sit down and they are very strict. (Anissa 396-405)
4.3.3.1 Religious identity and consumption

From the information given in the interviews, it seems that most of the respondents, including those who are relatively lax with respect to formal religious practice, follow the injunctions of their religion relating to meat and alcohol. Mirza says: ‘I haven’t gone that far to drink alcohol because it says, it is said in there not to drink or to make, it says in the Quran that alcohol changes your effect and the way you are’ (372).

Thus, as regards food and drink, both the more and the less observant respondents are engaged in collective processes of boundary construction and maintenance. Anissa explains how alcohol consumption creates this boundary:

Yeah because for a Muslim even if you don’t drink you can’t go to an environment where they sell alcohol as well and you can’t because at work you know when they have these sort of work’s dos and stuff and they probably, they organise going to places where there is like a restaurant or a pub or something where there is alcohol and I can’t, not that I can’t, I don’t want to go to that sort of environment anyway. So in a way you kind of like … In a way you feel isolated because you can’t do. Yeah, that you are different. (Anissa 709-719)

An alternative approach to Anissa’s detachment strategy is Ali’s talk about his efforts to adapt the main street to Muslims needs. Ali describes the efforts he and other Muslim customers in Rochdale made to adopt main stream food brands to their religious needs.

I mean we’ve kind of changed our McDonalds in Rochdale they used to like fry the bacon in the same oil as they used to fry the French fries but as they started recruiting more and more Pakistanis they started saying to the customers like this is not halal. Obviously people started dropping off and so they have changed it. We have got a halal Subway. Halal Subway like everything is halal. You’ve got your steaks and your chicken and like it is full of Pakistanis and Asian people. We don’t get that much, I mean I crave for Chinese food so much but I don’t get it. I get it in London so most of the time.

Q: Because it is halal.
A: It is halal and my girlfriend she kind of like because every time you go let’s go to Chinese. She’s like no I don’t want to go to Chinese. So I’ve heard they are opening one at Trafford Centre so similarly to Nandos. See all these food retailers they’ve kind of picked up on something.
Before I mean when I was in school I didn’t like going to McDonalds anyhow but I only been to McDonalds once or twice when I was finishing my GCSE. I would not go because I knew that all I could have was fillet of fish meal and that was like just a fish patty. It was nothing. I mean nowadays you’ve got your famous Wilmslow Road and people like Pizza Hut has bought a lot more vegetarian pizzas. (Ali 607-625)

As far as the devout respondents are concerned, this is only one of many ways in which they maintain a real sense of difference and distance from the wider community and strong feelings and solidarity with the minority. For the less devout, adherence to religious dietary laws may be a symbolic gesture of belonging to the group that does not translate into willingness to create a significant social distance between themselves and their British peers.

Halal. It is a centuries-old guide to how life should be lived. It alludes to a quality of life that is reflected in the way food is processed, clothes are designed, medicine is prepared, commerce is carried out, and how our personal and social relationships are conducted. Halal is a way of life for over a billion Muslims living in over 148 countries. In business terms, this is a huge consumer base spread out all over the world... The halal industry is bolstered by the demands from the world’s Muslim population that is getting younger, more educated, and affluent, who are embracing the Islamic contemporary and global lifestyle. (Halal World Forum, 2010)

This is an excerpt from the promotional video of the Halal World Forum, a yearly transnational economic summit inaugurated in 2006 in Malaysia. Since its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the summit has set an agenda to: ‘harmonize a fragmented global halal industry’. This industry now includes sectors beyond the food market such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, toiletries, and services such as banking, insurance and tourism. The halal marketplace today includes a vast array of products and services ranging from Mecca Cola, Fulla (the Islamic response to Barbie), the MacHalal- the Burger King Muslim, design collections for Muslim chic, Muslim Apps for the iPhone, to Islamic banking and halal-friendly tourism resorts in Dubai, Istanbul and London (Echchaibi, 2011)
Olivier Roy, in his book ‘Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah’ (2004), claims that religion now becomes not a cohabitee of westernised consumer culture but its enemy. He gives as example the attitudes of the Taliban to pop music or of Christian Voice to Jerry Springer: The Opera or the Twilight vampire franchise. He explains that these new fundamentalist forms of religion retreat from the western consumer culture. ‘They develop Christian forms of popular music and Muslim stand-up. Internet sites and advice columns arise where anxious adherents can ask their clerics to adjudicate on whether skinny jeans or holding hands in public or Harry Potter stories fall on the right side of the divide, or whether they are haram, tools of the devil’ (Roy, 2004, p.35).

Because faiths lose their local context they can circulate more freely globally and intersect with other “floating cultural markers”, giving rise to new hybrids like halal fast food, eco-kosher and cyber-fatwa. ‘The religious revival’, writes Roy (2004), ‘is primarily about the believer’s refusal to see his world reduced to the private sphere’ (p.19). The new fundamentalisms look with shock at a culture where there is no longer any evidence of their faith. They become isolated and begin to brandish the religious markers of their faith – crucifix, headscarf, Bible, faith accessories – as a demand for public recognition. In this context religion, for so long part of everyday culture, becomes strange. For the secular, people with faith are looked on as weird.

In the face of modern secularism, these new fundamentalisms, such as Wahabism, charismatic evangelical Christianity or Mormonism, are faced with a challenge. Either they withdraw and become a sect like the Amish or, at some level, they have to reconnect with ‘normal’ culture. To do this they have to look for a compromise, to negotiate. But this negotiation, Roy says, ‘is not being done round a table, through discussion. It is a process full of tensions, and what he calls formatting – trying to redefine what religion means in the public sphere’.

We can see this negotiation between majority and minority or between religion and civic society in the participants’ brand choice of fast food. Rather than opting for Asian fast food retailers the participants prefer to negotiate with McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Subway and the other global brands. They made a choice to fight for the right to be part of the westernised global consumption discourse without compromising their faith.
4.3.3.2 Muslim celebrities

Celebrities and public figures were not a major part of the discussion on religious discourses. However all the Muslim participants made a special effort to distance themselves from Bin Laden and the narrative he represents. For example Anissa says: ‘I don’t know Bin Laden, I don’t know Sadam Hussain because there are over one billion Muslims in the world and I’m not accountable for everyone’s actions’ (397-398). Anissa was also the only participant who chose a celebrity from her religious discourse. Anissa chose to represent the Prophet Muhammad in her self-identity collage (see below).

Figure 4.10 Prophet as a celebrity

When we read Anissa’s explanation for her choice of the prophet as inspiring character in her collage, we can see that similarly to Asim’s choice of a Bollywood celebrity she uses a self-verification strategy (Swan et al., 1998) as well. Anissa who has become engaged recently focuses on the issues that are important to her personally.

Q What makes him a good husband?
A He was just, because he had more than one wife and stuff. He was equal towards all of them. He never used to make them do anything he was, he used to do his own cleaning and sewing and stuff so I think a lot of men kind of think that you know all women should do everything and you know it’s not the man’s job and you know there are some people think their religion kind of like restricts women to doing that but that is not true. Because if you just read like the story of the prophet you kind of know that’s not true because that’s not the way he was with his wives.

Q So this is the main issue for you in his character?
A Yeah and it’s just like I’ve read about just the way he was, like how he was with people, how he used to treat them. As well as that what he went through to make a better life for people around him’. (Anissa 1316-1332)

4.3.3.3. Religion conclusion

The significance of religion has been manifested in this section. It has become clear that it is likely to influence the participants’ experience of self and affect their response to the environment. The crisis following the 11th of September and 7th of July terror attacks may increase in-group solidarity and identification with their religious identity. This could challenge the possibility of integration into British society and might create a self-identity, which is opposed to British identity, and the values it represents.

The discussion about the increasing importance of religion to the construction of the self-identity of second generation British Asians uncovers strong feelings of isolation and difference. These feelings might generate concern about the negative impact of integrating an Asian minority into British society. However, this needs to be balanced against the evidence that emerges in this research which suggests that religious discourses can be empowering experiences for these individuals in that they allow them to critique and challenge the cultural practices of their parents and develop a new discourse of social mobility.

These findings challenge the social construction of British Asian identity by shifting attention from the notion of cultural belonging and nationality to the exploration of the ways in which self-identity is ruptured and distorted (both in behaviour and practice) in the various shifting narratives of identity.

In the last two sections I have discussed the nature of the participants’ links to their country of origin and religion. The focus is on the dialogue between one’s beginnings or past stabilities (roots) and the subsequent pathways that connect various routes, thus underscoring the important intersections of roots/routes required to negotiate one’s self-identity in current culture. The next section will discuss another route to self-identity—the British Asian community discourse.
4.3.4 British Asian community and family discourses

The participants of this research were second and third generation South Asian immigrants. They were born in the United Kingdom into the immigrant discourse of their parents. Together with the family they have experienced the ups and downs of settling in the new society. The experience they describe is of hard work and sacrifice. Some of them describe memories of childhood with parents who hardly had time to be with them. Jaz offers the most vivid description of this experience:

When I was growing up ... before I started nursery, I always got passed from babysitter to babysitter because my parents came here to earn money and stand on their own two feet, so they were both working twelve hours a day seven days a week, so I was always, and babysitters brought me up really, and then when I started school, only on my first day, I think dad dropped me off, and then every day like throughout my whole primary school, only babysitters used to come and pick me up and drop me off, mum used to drop me off down their house early in the morning, seven-thirty, before work, and then I, then they used to drop me off at school and then, I'd basically like I never had Mum and Dad waiting in the playground like everybody else’s Mum and Dad, so, that was a bit hard but then, I was, I think I was quite a mature child because I understood why (Jaz 139-147).

Her parents have tried to help Jaz to understand the reason for this situation by emphasising the economic motivation for their immigration to England:

‘Mum and Dad, they always made me understand, they never, just left it as it is, they always said, look it’s for your future, don’t you want your own house, don’t you want your own room, you know and then you can have all these things’ (Jaz 150-154).

Success in education or the economic sphere is highly regarded in the British South Asian community and the families. Ali gives the example of his father:

He won’t categorise himself but people will categorise him because of his job. Because he came in and he became a judge, he was a lawyer and became a judge so that. Yeah that is something within our culture that you know when someone has kind of elevated themselves to be a bit of a, something outside, I don’t want to be rude to these people but something above, because they fair enough they strive as my dad did. (Ali 307-313)
Similar to Jaz, Ali emphasises the importance of hard work: ‘My dad when he came he grafted three jobs per day. He was a bus driver, he worked in the cotton mill and he was working in insurance company as well. Three jobs for I don’t know how long until he started his university’ (Ali 315-320).

The second generation is expected to continue this ethos of hard working and success. The participants report extra pressure by their parents to work hard and do well in school and to achieve high-ranked jobs. Ali feels he is expected to follow his father’s footsteps: ‘You know, I can never follow his footsteps but I’ve tried to do something similar. Obviously it does not even come in the fraction to what he has done but I did my first job as a paper round when I was 12 and it was really, really hard work like waking up in the morning at half five’ (Ali 341-345).

Anu describes the pressure from her family to work hard and build herself up financially: ‘Our family ethics are very, earn your own living, make a stand for yourself and don’t you know, don’t, go on like, don’t go on benefits unless you have to, basically. Because you have to try hard to get to where you want to be’ (Anu 179-183).

The parents make sure their children will listen to the main career discourse of the community and try to de-legitimise any voice in the community that will not follow this line. Sonia describes how her father has pushed her to work hard on her education. She says: ‘My father said they [the non-achieving children from her community] are not as clever or not as intelligent because their parents don’t push them because they may not understand the language they don’t push the child to work better at school’ (Sonia 338-343). And she continues: ‘But because my father was academic himself he had to push me to make sure I get the top level of education ... he was like you have to be at the top. Because it’s you in this world not anybody else, you have to look at yourself and you have to be at the top’ (Sonia 343-347).
The families and the communities play great and positive roles in supporting the second generation in their first career steps. This help will be in the form of community network, financial and other support. Sonia explains the importance of the community as an emotional support group and one which, at the same time, serves the need for networking:

If I move to London, I’ll probably go to the ethnic community centres which are there. So I don’t feel, because it’s very hard to come to a non-tradition place and you might feel a bit outsider so you have to go to the community centres to know what is happening there, what activities are happening there so you involve yourself. Hence being wherever community is from I will want to engross myself in what is happening there otherwise I will just be an outsider. If you have contacts who might … . If I go to the community centre there might be some manager or boss of some place and make good interlinks and he will help you. (Sonia278-289)

Most parents put a great effort into ensuring that they transmit the basic tenets of family morality to their children. The need to put group loyalty before self-interest is constantly stressed, above all because this creates warmer more secure relationships than anything available in the outside world. In case of possible deviance parents will explain the risk of losing respect in the community the family would suffer if any one of their children should depart too seriously from the community’s norms.

4.3.4.1 Hyper-South Asian Community

For many parents, rearing children within a British context is difficult because of different cultural expectations for children in the United Kingdom compared to those in India or Pakistan. Naidoo (2007) claims (p.58) that parents perpetuate and maintain cultural values based upon memories from the Indian sub-continent. These memories have an important role in maintaining cultural reality at the family level. At times, the acculturation process of parents and children often polarises the family and contributes to problems resulting from a clash of cultures.
Many of the participants feel that their parents attempt to imitate the culture of their country of origin is not relevant for their lives and is out of touch with the British Asian reality. Nisha says: ‘Our parents are still living from what they left. So to them they think this is right ... . It is a bit strange (Nisha 1947).

Ali tries to illustrate this change and describes a love affair that happened between two of his friends, one a Sikh and the other Hindu:

The name says it all so yeah, I see it if they [the mixed cultures couple] are happy, I mean this is what the new generation, my generation. Because back in the days, had this happened 20-25 years ago this would have resulted in you know the girl’s family and the boy’s family coming down and separating them or you know getting them to move either outside the country or somewhere else. Or taking them back home to India or Pakistan and moving them into a forced marriage. But now it has changed, we as a society and we as a culture has I think it is moving to where it is like meeting the modern world, the western world. And we are kind of bringing our culture with it but we are kind of integrating a lot more than what our fathers did. (Ali 134-143)

Bally takes a more political view and explains that some of the customs and values his community keeps here in the United Kingdom are out of touch. On one occasion Bally discusses the fact that the British-Indian community still keeps the social division of castes. He criticises it and says:

The way they are seem to think they can actually turn around and look at other people and say well you are lower than me and they won’t speak. I mean it sounds so silly because in this country everyone is almost equal. Everyone has got houses, everyone has got cars, it’s like no one is actually that much different or higher and lower and still people say oh we’re not associating ourselves with that family because they are that. And it’s very backward thinking, very prejudiced over nothing. There is no real. (Bally 1164-1172)

On another occasion Bally discusses the fact that British-Sikh people buy customised car registration plate to show they have a status of Jatt-land owners in India:
Yes I don’t think there is much now because a lot of people are like, it’s to do with past. I mean someone here now might be a Chamar who might have more money than someone who is seen as a Jatit who is supposed to be a farmer, a rich, the top of the food chain sort of thing. So it’s like nowadays it doesn’t make a difference you don’t know who is who to some extent. And it’s quite shocking sometimes to still think that you are still thinking like that when that stereotype almost is nothing in relation to him now. I mean Jatt was supposed to be a farmer in Sikh, if you are a Jatt that’s like the top class basically. And now I could say you could define me as a Jatt but what have I got to do with farming, I live in a house, I don’t own a farm, no tractor. It’s like that doesn’t relate to us so why are we still using those stereotypes to define who we are now. How can you define someone but what they are not anymore? So it is a bit surprising because I still see people even on number plates you will see Jatt. I know one of my own friends they are a bit like that, they’ve been bought up like that. Yeah, Jatt, J a double t and then N for his surname... . (Bally 1117-1149)

This criticism of the younger generation to the approach of the British South Asian community is not limited to the social system only; we can see its influence on their consumption behaviour and lifestyle as well. Nisha explains:

Nowadays even Indian films are more revealing and I think even our parents look at it and think do girls really wear that India. But they are getting a lot more advanced in Bombay than the Asian girls here. I think it is because our parents have brought all that culture here and expect us to live like that so we’ve got to deal with that but they’ve got to deal with, in India they’ve got to deal with the new kind of habits that come along. They can afford to do that. But our parents still expect us to you know dress in a certain way. (Nisha 1915-1926)

Nisha describes a situation where she bought a dress for a wedding party that will take place in India but her parents thought that the dress was too revealing and she had to get the support of her family members who live in India to convince her parents that the dress is fine in the new Indian cultural reality:

Our parents are still living from what they left. Once, a year or so ago, for my uncles wedding in India I wouldn’t get a suit and I’ve got a thing about a suit having no arms on it. You can either put the arms on the suit or take the arms off like have it sleeveless. And my mother was getting worried, she said: you can’t have one without arms I don’t know what my family are going to say. And my cousin in India was like: don’t worry about it. Even my auntie in India rang up to say don’t worry about it it’s the fashion here. My mother was like, okay. I probably wouldn’t have done this in the UK (Nisha 1942-1953).
4.3.4.2 Enforcing the old way

Families, in their desire to achieve cultural continuity, are often in conflict with their children because the latter are able to adapt at a much faster rate than their parents, who still prescribe and maintain the cultural status quo in regards to parenting from the homeland. The greatest fear of all parents is that their children, in becoming too British, are losing sight of the family’s preferred normative submission to certain core values and practices. Hence, conformity is equated with loyalty to the family.

Summayah expresses the need of loyalty to her parents in her self-identity collage when she brings a quote from the Quran (fig. 4.12).

Figure 4.11 Loyalty to parents

She explains: ‘The reason why I’ve got this quotation in here is simply because it has something about parents ... if you really want to get somewhere in life, respect your parents more than anything in life’ (Summayah 730-734).

As such, families of the South Asian community are often forced to establish ‘strict rules regarding their children’s behaviour in order to establish some form of control over them’ (Baptiste, 2005, p. 352). Some parents may go as far as minimising their children’s contact with the visible marker of the British society for example dating based on personal choice, partying, using contraceptives or marrying for love vs. arranged marriage (Baptiste, 2005, p. 352)

Sonia describes the curfew her father imposed on her to make sure she will not be tempted to take part in the British night life style. Sonia:
But my dad said for my daughter I want my daughters to come home at night so I know they are safe, they are in a good environment because he knows the culture in UK. And if you are out, you might be innocent but you don’t know who is around you. So my father would say at night in the evening, you know after the dark time that’s your curfew to be in. (Sonia 376-381)

Nisha describes her personal experience of trying to date a guy she has met in university without the permission of her parents:

I think my parents they’re not like that, there is honour because they’re not going to say as long as you’re happy we’re ok, they will say to me well, were you not listening to us, so... you know why do you want to ... embarrassment in the community, and things like that so they’ve heard about him but they’re not too impressed with it, and my dad says, if he ever comes into contact with him he’ll kill him’ (Nisha 207-214).

Sometimes the participants try to hide forbidden activities from their parents. Mirza, whose Muslim religion forbids smoking, describes his experience with smoking:

Basically I haven’t drank alcohol but when I smoked I didn’t feel like that I still felt the same way I was when I smoked weed. And if I told my parents this they would just be disappointed and they would be, it would change the barrier I think because before when I was at home it was, I was like be home at 6 o’clock. After 6 o’clock stay at home or go out with friends with my parent’s approval. Went to uni the barrier changes. The trust issue that my parents come to is they understand fair enough they know you are out, they trust you are out (Mirza 372-376).

4.3.4.3 The judgmental community

Among the participants, closely-knit communities were seen as regulating and sanctioning a very limited range of appropriate behaviour by gossiping. The status of the parents within the community could be in danger when children deviate from the norm or don’t perform to the expected standard, the competition of Izzat as Ballard (1989) termed it. Bally describes:

Yeah it is mentality. I mean I couldn’t associate myself with that mentality. I wouldn’t associate myself. And even small things socially there are a lot of sort of arguments within communities to do with money. It’s very sort of status orientated. You can’t do that because we are so and so. And you can’t do this because it will look bad on our family. It is very status orientated. Our life is dictated by those kinds of rules. (Bally 906-913)
Sonia was one of the few participants that were positive about being part of the community. She emphasises the role of the community as a source of self-identity. She says:

For myself I found it easy to be in the community, I’m fine with it, I know my limits, I know where I can say something or where I can’t say something, I think I’ve brought up quite well, I know with the elders I can’t swear but maybe this one, that does swear maybe I’ll accept their swearing because they’re used to it but with elders I know I wouldn’t swear I wouldn’t call them in a disrespectful manner, and things like that.

Then she explains the importance of community for her self-identity:

Sometimes you have to, look at them and they remind you what you are, sometimes you can, run like a headless chicken and you forget you’re a Pakistani, you forget you have a religion, but interacting, with Muslims, interacting with Pakistanis, remind you that, yeah, I am a Pakistani and I should attend, I should attend the prayers, I should attend the community affairs, to keep myself. (736-751)

However, when she discusses her participation in the activities of the British Pakistani community of her university the discourse of judgment re-appears:

A The Pakistani community in university some of them, thought that I was very snobby, thought, I don’t know, thought that I was a bit of a high level and I don’t know, they don’t want to, they, I think they feel intimidated, or something like that.

Q Did you, did you feel it was fair comment, or ...

A I thought that was a very unfair comment because they are, they’re commenting on the way I dress, on the way I walk, on the way I talk they’ve not actually talking to me, but, but I have some friends from Burton that have come to this university, and they know me perfectly well, they know me how I am, my personality, and they say she’s nothing like that you need to go and speak to her, and you know you’ll want to be a friend, she’ll be, you’ll want to go out with her, you’ll want to interact, and then I had no Pakistani friends, at all (823-837).
4.3.4.4 Agency and community

The type of reflexivity we have seen in the participants’ discussion on family and community traditions shows that the participants refuse to take the family and the community views for granted, but instead have reflected on them. Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2000) explain that this reflexivity liberates the individual from traditional constraints; Giddens says: ‘Freedom is not a given characteristic of the human individual, but derives from the acquisition of an ontological understanding of external reality and personal reality’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 47). This way of thinking was shared between my participants. Giddens terms this way of thinking ‘institutional reflexivity’ (ibid.).

By viewing some of their parents’ values as outdated and out of place, participants were able to reject many of their parents’ values without compromising their Asian identity. Most of them saw certain elements as meaningful, comforting and important; others they regarded as in opposition to their own value systems and these they chose not to follow. The fundamental aspect of these value systems were the rights of the individual in relation to prescribed ways of living.

Bally summarises this point of view:

The thing is with me I see religion slightly differently from my parents in terms of I do believe a lot in what Sikhism say but I think ultimately there are certain things that I don’t agree with. Certain things that my life so far, like obviously eating meat, certain things that I do, drink and things like that. Probably a slightly different lifestyle so I wouldn’t, religion, although I understand my religion quite well and I believe in a lot of what it says. Because a lot of what Sikhism tells you is quite good in terms of leading a good life, it is more moral, it tells you to live morally in a sense. But even religion gets distorted certain people you get. (Bally 767-775)

4.3.4.5 Positive view on tradition

Deviation from tradition is not necessarily a permanent outcome among the participants. Lindridge et al. (2004, p. 21) assert that the desire to rebel on the part of the children ‘diminished as participants grew older and they tended to return to the traditional South Asian values’. Mirza describes this process as it happened in his life:
Well I still went to mosque but I didn’t take it seriously enough. You know I just did the basic, what I needed to do. Basically when I was a kid parents told me I was a Muslim and I believed I was a Muslim that’s it and whatever they told me. But then as time progressed on and living in Leicester and coming to university I found more information about being Muslim and found the history, what kind of a background I’m from, what you are supposed to do. So as time progress I’m learning more and more I feel more mature so I understand what my parents are teaching. When I was younger I thought about I don’t know why I am praying five times a day. Why is this such a headache blah, blah, blah but now I understand why I pray five times a day, why I fast and why I do this. I understand the reason for what my parents were teaching me when I was younger. Because I wasn’t willing to learn when I was younger. (Mirza 49-62)

4.3.4.6 Positive attitude toward family and community

Lindridge et al. (2004) go on to say that an important influence on the conformity was the power of the emotional bonds with family and community and the desire to please them. Sonia expresses this idea regarding her community:

I think I would know the things that would hurl, a society and, even though you shouldn’t think like that, they always say it’s not, it’s not society it’s your life, but your part of that society, if you start doing it then maybe the other person will, and then somehow if I’m doing a corrupt thing then they might think this corrupt thing is normal so then everybody else will start doing it and then. (Sonia 758-763)

Bally who was the most vocal opponent of traditional and religious community life style admits that he would prefer his future wife to be Indian for the sake of a happy family life: ‘I probably wouldn’t be that bothered to be quite honest. As long as she is a decent person then I mean, it probably might be preferable, depending how they get married it might be preferable if they are Asian, it just makes things easier in terms of families (Bally 1287-1293).

Summayah repeats the same idea as Bally when I ask her if she would consider marrying a non-Muslim English person: ‘I don’t think my parents would accept him. He will not be able to understand my values and how I’m as a person. I want him to realise that family means a lot to me and I can’t just go sacrificing everything in order to keep one person happy’ (123-129).
Mirza explains that the main challenge is to make sure he will not disappoint his parents: ‘They won’t disconnect you it’s just think the way I was bought up or the way I feel is that I would not want to disappoint my parents and I know this would hurt them and I would not want to hurt them’ (Mirza 360-362).

This need for parental and community approval influences consumption of goods as well as social behaviour. Raswan describes his thoughts when he bought his car: ‘I bought Audi, Yeah a bit of a respected car a bit err…not sure who did I think about when I bought my car my dad or my friends. Err both probably yeah both, yeah, yeah’ (Raswan 742-746).

Anu takes her mother as a role model:

I mean when I was younger my mum is very, she is very perfect you know she does everything perfectly, everything on the right time, she puts the right amount of herbs in and she knows exactly what to do. The clothes everything, washing, hoovering she is the perfect housewife and you know. When I was younger I was like I’ll never be like mum I’ll let my children do whatever they like, sit however they want. But now I am older I say the exact same things like mum. You know when I go out shopping for food I’ll say: oh that’s got no stalk in, that apple has got no stalk in it so I can’t have that one, I’ll pick the one that does have a stalk inside. When I was younger it doesn’t matter you are going to wash the fruit anyway. But those little things now I am doing which you know my mum used to really pick on. And now I realise that actually you know these are the things that are always going to be with me. You know they are not picky things they are just things that you know. (Anu 529-546)

4.3.4.7 Pan-Asian community

‘The worst thing one can do with words’, wrote George Orwell in 1953, ‘is to surrender to them. If language is to be an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought, one must let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about’ (1953, p. 169). This, I would argue, is the case with the word ‘community’. Based on the findings of this research it seems that the word ‘community’ tends to mean too much when understood in a strong sense, too little when understood in a weak sense, or nothing at all because of its sheer ambiguity.
For structuralist or essentialist writers, such as Brubaker and Cooper (2000), community is a collective phenomenon. In this context, ‘identity’ denotes sameness among members of a group or a category. This may be understood objectively — as sameness in itself or subjectively — as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness. This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action (Walker, 1994). This idea stands as the basis of claims made by writers such as Lindridge et al. (2004), that we can segment and target ethnic consumers as a clearly defined target group.

In this section I would like to explore how the participants perceive and treat the concept of community. Some of the participants, for example Summayah, take a very local view of community.

‘Q:  Let’s stop on the word ‘community’... Who are they?

A:  For me, you don’t get community membership card. It’s very hard to define a community. I guess my own community is people I know and feel safe with, that I know will not judge me or I won’t have to prove myself over and over again. That’s how I feel. I never really thought about that to be honest with you because I have always seen home as something dear to me. As something I could rely on, I know that’s always going to be there. (Summayah 714-730)

Mirza offers a completely different outlook on community from Sumayyah. For him the Muslim world is his community. There are two circles in his life; his family and friends and the global Muslim community. He says: ‘For me it is important the person is Muslim he or she can be from Egypt, Jordan or White is doesn’t make any difference to me’ (Mirza 199-202).

Ali’s definition for his community is focused more on exclusion; he explains who he does not regard as part of his community:
It is different. I am a Sayed Shiite. Sayed is basically to do with we come from the family of the prophet so we are Sayed’s and then. It is not a problem with Sunni there is a problem with Mohabis I would never even think about associating myself with a Mohaby because it is different school of thought altogether. That would be just going against all my principles with regards to my religion. It is not all of them, but it is like, the difference is what you can say is the difference between sky and the earth. (Ali 709-713)

Samera describes her community as combination of localism and ethnicity: ‘I live in a Pakistani community, my house is kind of in the middle of Pakistani area and all my friends are Pakistani Muslims’ (Samera 627-629).

Sonia emphasises sameness based on language:

Q And it is ‘Pakistani community’ for you? nothing else?
A There’s language barriers for me ... . I know they [the Pakistani community]- will speak what I speak
Q Urdu?
A Urdu or Punjabi, but there’s Hindis, only some of them will speak so that will, or straight away cause me a problem, with communicating.
Q Even if, if they are Punjabis themselves?
A If they can speak the language, I have no problem, because that’s the straight away difference, if you don’t know a and b c and I know a b c we can’t, we can’t communicate how we going to? (Sonia 705-720)

From the experience of the participants, it is clear that community affiliation is related to social network, family and religious background. Ethnic identities are socially defined phenomena. That is, the meaning and boundaries of ethnic identity are constantly being renegotiated, revised, and redefined depending on specific situations and the set of circumstances that each individual or ethnic group encounters. For example, the fluid nature of community boundaries manifests itself in the interviews of Jaz and Bally. Jaz initially defines her community as Indian (334) and later she defines it as Asian (370). Bally first defines his community as Asian (76) later as Punjabi (753) and eventually as Sikh (1189). Each of these categories carries with it different meanings and lifestyles.

Emergent ethnic identity involves the creation of new forms of group identity due to the convergence of particular circumstances. More specifically, because of demographic changes or competition and conflict with other groups, a new ethnic
identity based on group solidarity and similarity of experiences might form. This form has been titled in American literature ‘Pan-Asian’ (for example Park, 2008) to include East Asian with the South Asians or, in the more specific South Asian context, ‘Desi’ (for example Sharma, 2005). The term ‘Desi’ refers to an Urdu/Hindi word which translates as ‘from the sub-continent’ (Chaudhary, 2009). Desi, as defined by a number of South Asians as well as a recent MediaWeek article by Oullette (2008), refers to those people and their children who originate from nations that were once part of colonial India. The term Desi is in use also in the United Kingdom. See, for example, the BBC podcast aimed at the Asian community under the title ‘Desi Download’ or the Desi student association aimed at British Asian students in British universities.

The participants in this research did not use the term Desi, however, most of them have described feelings of having a Pan-Asian orientation toward other South Asians. For example Mirza describes his friends in the self-identity collage (fig. 4.13):

A They are all Asian. These basically me and this girl here we are Muslim and the rest aren’t Muslim.
Q Hindu?
A Ah Sikh, Hindu, Hindu and I know that with her I know if I put her with these friend fine, they’ll be fine, with these three I never get worried that they got great personalities and they should click in hundred percent fine with all this group of people (461-473)

Anu describes her circle of friends (fig. 4.14):

But it’s not like they’re all Sikh because this one’s Sikh, this one’s Sikh and this one’s Sikh, this one’s Muslim, this one’s Hindu this one’s Indian, so they’re all like Asian, they don’t have to be Sikh, they’re just Asians. (Anu 376-378)
The South Asian cultural industry becomes increasingly globalised and companies with global reach target groups of consumers by appealing to their Asian identities (Purkayastha, 2005). For example, the music industry targets British South Asians with ‘South Asian’ music produced in the United Kingdom. This market enjoys great success according to the Guardian (15/08/2003). British South Asian artists such as Punjabi MC or Aamir Khan enjoy great success globally and get recognition all over
the world. The Mumbai based film industry, Bollywood, increasingly markets films globally and the same trend occurs in the fashion industry that has witnessed rapid growth in the number of British South Asian designers who offer young and trendy South Asian consumers in Britain and in other parts of the post-industrial world, the opportunity to express themselves by adopting their own unique style of fashion.

Scholars, who study the influence of these processes on individuals from ethnic minorities, point out that the availability of these life styles and consumption items has led to new ways of participating in societies. Traditional sources of identity, which have been related to nationality, family, employment and geographic proximity, are now being replaced by more fluid identities based on construction of life styles (Hebdige, 1999).

Bourdieu (1984) claims that self-identities are structured through patterns of consumption. These shared patterns of consumption also allow the commonalities of life styles to develop across different groups in global society. People seek to display their individuality, sense of style and distinctiveness from other groups through the choice of a particular range of goods that delineate their life style, while they bond with others who display similar life styles. Purkayastha (2005, p.120) says that South Asian British are also increasingly drawn into similar forms of consumption as primary avenues for expressing ethnicity: music, fashion, movies and lifestyles are among the building blocks of the new form of ethnicity.

**Music-** Many of the participants prefer the musical genre which blends traditional cultural elements with western hip hop such as the Bhangra or the ‘Bollywood remix’ that adds electronic and dance music from the west. A good example is Bally who had experience in playing for the band of Punjabi MC (the most successful Bhangra musician) and even took part in Punjabi MC’s European tour. Bally tells the story: ‘We ended up going to Oslo. I actually went on tour with like an Indian artist, Punjabi MC he is quite. When I was actually in college, I was actually 16 or 17 I was quite good at an Indian instrument, it’s like a drum, a dhol. Yeah and I was very good because my family are a little bit into music and what not so since a kid (Bally 255-259).
However, when I ask Bally if playing a musical genre that mixes West and East makes him feel less traditionally Indian and more cosmopolitan he claims the opposite:

It’s not more down to how I’d say I’m more westernised than my Asian friend. They are probably even more westernised than me because I probably understand my religion and speak more fluently and have a better understanding and probably do things probably more traditional than others would. Like I play Indian instruments most of them probably don’t even know how to say it rather than play it. And it’s like small things like that but I wouldn’t say that my dress sense probably. I think it’s just the way I see myself. (Bally 1272-1279)

Visual Media- In addition to music I was also interested in the participants’ preferences in visual media, mainly cinema, television and the press. Regarding television, there was a relative homogeneity of taste. All the participants could speak their mother tongue and enjoyed watching the Asian channels on sky Digital. Their choice of channels reflects the new Pan-Asian identity. For example Asim, a Pakistani-British participant, enjoys watching the Indian channels and he explains: ‘It is because their films are a lot more stylish, more better movies, their actors are more recognised. So yeah I like it more’ (Asim 701).

In the case of printed and digital media there is a plethora of Asian magazines and lifestyle websites. All female participants read these magazines and take inspiration from them for their fashion choices. Sonia who was in a process of looking for her bridal dress says: ‘I’m not subscribed to Asiana [Asian lifestyle magazine-see illustration taken from Sonia’s self-identity collage fig. 4.15], but I will buy the copy when the bridal one comes out because I will be looking at the colours and be definitely be inspired by it’ (Sonia 1412).
Fashion- The participants’ consumption of ethnic fashions is not a simple reflection of strict adherence to tradition. Their recreation of pan-ethnic fashions does not reflect any strict social norms of dress code based on the accepted norms of their religion-Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or people of a specific nationality or language group. Instead, it represents an emerging, homogenized South-Asianess: a South Asian image that can be adopted by all members of the British Asian second generation. For example, Sonia a British Pakistani participant describes how she has decided to wear a sari (Indian garment) to her brother’s wedding party; something that the previous generation of her family would regard as unthinkable. She says: ‘So it depends on occasion, like at my brother’s wedding I wore a sari which is Indian tradition, it is not Pakistani tradition. Sari is Indian tradition but I love them so I will wear it. And it is very pretty in any colour’ (Sonia 207-210).

Fashion consumption appeared to be influenced by skin colour and traditional restrictions. For example, Sonia describes her preference for a cosmetic brand that caters for darker skins

There’s a shop I buy, it’s from Mac, m a c, and they have, they, specialise in Asian skin, and they specialise in make up that suits Asian skin, so I get my make up from there. Yeah, there is where I get my makeup, they’re not Asian-based, they’re totally non-Asian but they specialise in the, they
specialise they say darker skin, they, cater for that, different, different colours, and they have all the skin tones from really really really fair, to really really really dark. (Sonia 1212-1221)

The Muslim female participants felt the need to find alternative ways to express their fashion choice to compensate for the limits of their traditional dress. For example, Anissa discusses her jewellery choice that is affected by the hijab that covers her head: ‘I think in a way that is the same with you know like, because I wear a hijab I don’t wear earrings. So I’m not wearing any rings at the moment but I would probably buy jewellery or bracelets that stand out more (Anissa 1619-1621).

Samera compensates for her religious fashion restrictions with the consumption of top brand cosmetics, bags and shoes; see her self-identity collage below:

Figure 4.15 Samera’s fashion choices

And Summayah develops keen interests in body decoration with henna tattoos; (see her self-identity collage fig. 4.17).
All of them have a clear sense that religion and fashion are not in contradiction and try to be fashionable and glamorous on one hand and observe their religion on the other hand.

Food- For the majority of the participants the consumption of food reflected the maintenance of cultural practices. Most of them stated that they liked ‘rice and curry’, which was said to be the main type of food consumed at home. However, the participants mentioned as well the consumption of other types of food consumed in the domestic sphere. This food termed as ‘English’ or ‘Western’, includes pizzas, pastas, chips, etc. Asim describes his food consumption:

It’s a good mix at home but mainly Asian food. My parents, my dad really likes to eat Asian food and because it’s my dad’s house. In my home, it depends on, I don’t mind. I like a mixture of English and Asian food. We order pizzas at our house in terms of a take out. But it depends on my partner what she likes. (Asim 1120-1128)

Family influence on consumption: The findings of this research suggest strong family influence on the purchasing decisions of the participants. Bearden and Etzel (1982) suggest that reference group (of which family is classified as one) are a strong influence in public consumption circumstances. From a marketing and consumer behaviour perspective, the influence of the family on individual behaviour is often manifested in the type of product and brand purchased by individuals (O’Guinn et al., 1986).
Sonia describes how she chooses what brand of rice she should buy: ‘When I went first time I’ve called my mum and asked her where do you get your rice from, I just copy her’ (Sonia 1343-1347). In another example Bally described how he would ask for his father’s advice when buying a car. Most of the participants say that will buy clothes with either their mother, partner or sisters. Nisha says she would ask for her mother’s advice only when it comes to Asian clothes: ‘

Generally, I mean I’d go out and buy things because I like them not because. If I was going to buy Asian clothes, I would maybe take my mum, I would take a relative because I’m not too good at picking up, making sure it’s the right price and things like that, but yeah generally I’d buy western clothes on my own. (Nisha 527-530)

Ali will go with one of his sisters to buy clothes. He says:

One of my sisters I’d always get her to come with me because I can’t decide when it comes to clothes with regards to anything. So like you know with that I’m kind of a bit you know indecisive when it comes to clothes. I mean I like something maybe a t-shirt or a shirt or whatever and if my sister says yeah that will look alright on you I won’t even bother trying it on. I do go out on my own as well but if I am buying it for myself I will actually think about it and look in the mirror and this and that and but if one of my sisters say this will look good on you, this is alright I will just buy it blindly. I wouldn’t even like you know look at the price or anything I would just get it. (Ali 885-913)

O’Guinn et al. (1986) argues that the influence of family on decision making and consumption is still under developed and rarely tested in research.

Use of Asian celebrities and models in advertisements- The Guardian (21/04/2011) reports that ‘Clearcast’- the body that supervises all television commercials before they are broadcast, found that TV advertising is: ‘drastically under-representing’ ethnic minority groups. Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities account for about 13% of the UK population. Saad Saraf, the chairman of the ‘ethnic diversity’ group at the industry body the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising says: ‘What these figures reveal, rather disappointingly, is that commercials are rather drastically under-representing the diverse makeup of the UK population’, He continues: ‘People react better to advertising when they see themselves reflected in it," said Saraf. "I would therefore advise [advertisers] to take a better look at who their customers are
and hope that these figures will become markedly more representative over the coming years.’ The findings of my research do not support Saraf’s claims. None of the participants felt that it is important for them to see British Asian actors appearing in television commercials. Most of them develop cynical points of view about it. For example, Sonia questions the motivation of the advertisers in using an Asian character in the commercial. She says: ‘They’re not doing it for the respect, they’re doing it for the cash, and I personally understand that, and that’s about it really’ (Sonia 1383).

The majority of the participants claim that, for them, value for money and quality of the brand is more important than the use of Asian models or actors in the commercial. Mirza explains:

For me these brands would not get credited at all [for using Asian models], to me it doesn’t make a difference, No it’s not an important thing to me. For me it’s the way it looks, if it looks good I’ll buy it, if it doesn’t look good, then I will not buy it, it doesn’t really matter, if that jacket looked good, I would buy that jacket if it looked good, but if it doesn’t look good I would not go out of my way. (Mirza 1275-1283)

4.3.5 Summary of South Asian identity

In this section I summarise the key themes that have emerged in the conversations with the participants about their South Asian identity.

4.3.5.1 Traditionalist vs. the rebel

The participants found themselves between two discourses: ‘the traditional’ discourse was associated with discourses that dictated how one should look and behave in accordance with community and religion views. In contrast, ‘the rebel’ was the individual who disassociates her/himself from traditional Asian discourse and deliberately adopts and pursues identities or behaviour which took them away from this traditional position and moved them closer to the Western or British discourse as they perceived these.
There was a contrast between these two extreme identities and the reality the participants live. None of the participants could position themselves solely within the categories they had described. Their lived realities were completely different and involved a complex negotiation between identities to suit the context they were in.

4.3.5.2 Attachment vs. rejection of parents’ homeland

It seems that the participants are positioned between two discourses regarding their country of origin. On the one hand the presence of the homeland of their parents is important for them. Most of them did not visit India or Pakistan very much and their information is based mainly on stories they hear at home, family photos and watching television programs on Asian channels. For some of them, family is not in the homeland anymore but spread all over the world. Consequently, the ties to it are diminishing. However, they take a proactive approach to creating the presence of the homeland, they learned to speak fluent Punjabi, Hindi or Urdu, they receive pictures, and DVDs of weddings or any family functions and they use the internet to keep in touch.

On the other hand, some of the participants describe a feeling of difference when they arrived at the country of origin. The language barriers and cultural differences made them feel like outsiders. Some of them have explained that they could not feel at home because the locals treat them as British. It was hard for them to find a sense of belonging internally and they felt more connected to Britain. They felt even more like outsiders in the homeland of their parents when they encountered the different political culture.

However, this detachment is not felt when it comes to the influence of popular culture from South Asia. Selecting Asian clothes is an important way in which second generation British South Asians express their transnational belonging. Fashion serves as a cultural tool for building bridges across national boundaries and enables them to situate themselves between these boundaries. Having family in India or Pakistan provides British born Asians with a kind of ethnic fashion specialist that is unavailable to them in Britain. Through these cross-border fashion talks, the
participants learn the latest styles in India or Pakistan, which they can then modify to reflect their own reality.

Bollywood films and Asian TV channels certainly offer the participants a common theme for conversations with parents and friends. Cultural products take on an important role in their self-identity construction.

4.3.5.3 Religion vs. ethnicity

The special significance of religion lies in the fact that it is central to the participants’ sense of who they are. They came to recognise that they were part of a small, highly visible religious minority in British society. Their religious prescriptions for action do not relate to one specific sphere of life. Rather they involve all areas of social existence including mundane activities.

The participants try to distinguish between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘religion’ as a source of identity. They gave examples of a wide range of behaviours which they deem to be ‘traditional’, ‘cultural’, or ‘ethnic’ rather than religious, including practices relating to caste, dowries, arranged marriage, and marriage ceremonies. Religion, on the other hand, has a universal relevance representing a set of absolute truths. The Muslim participants express a sense of belonging to a global religious discourse that cut across cultures, borders and ethnicities.

The participants position themselves in different places between the ethnic-cultural discourse and the religious discourse. It seems that for the majority of the participants the distinction between these two positions was not clear cut. They found it hard to maintain the focus on rightful action and keep their modern lifestyle. All the participants report that they find themselves negotiating continually between religion restrictions and the need to lead their lives to accommodate the different demands of modern reality. Examples of these negotiations include celebrating Christmas with the family, appropriating and modifying traditional dress to western taste and more.
For the participants in this study, a significant development of their religious identity occurred in response to a crisis – the events and aftermath of 11th of September 2001 and the 7th of July 2005. Some of them say that they try to positively represent Muslims and Islam to others. Because they believed that their religion was now viewed negatively by many of their fellow British citizens, they felt a need to both explain and demonstrate their faith more strongly than before. Muslim participants made a special effort to distance themselves from Bin Laden and the narrative he represents. Abuse after the crises was the experience of the non-Muslim (Hindu and Sikh as well as Muslims) participants as well, and one which helped in the development of Pan-Asian identity.

From the information given in the interviews, it seems that most of the respondents, including those who are relatively lax with respect to formal religious practice, follow the injunctions of their religion relating to meat and alcohol. Thus, as regards to food and drink, both the more and the less observant respondents are engaged in a collective process of boundary construction and maintenance.

An alternative approach to the detachment strategy taken to avoid some western food was the efforts to adapt the main brands such as McDonalds or Subway to Muslims needs. Participants made a choice to fight for the right to be part of the westernised global consumption discourse without compromising their faith.

4.3.5.4 Negotiation vs. acceptance of community and family’s values and traditions and the emergence of the Pan-Asian community

The second generation of South Asian immigrants have experienced the ups and downs of settling in the new society. The experience they describe is of hard work and sacrifice. Success in education or the economic sphere is highly regarded in the British South Asian community and among the families represented here. The participants are expected to continue this ethos of hard work and success. In return, the families and the communities play an extensive and a positive role in supporting the second generation in their first career steps. This help will be in the form of providing a community network, financial and other support. This influences the
conformity to parents and community values as well as strengthening the power of the emotional bonds with family and community and the desire to please them.

The acculturation process of parents and children often polarises the family and contributes to problem resulting from a clash of cultures. Many of the participants feel that their parents’ attempt to imitate the culture of their country of origin is not relevant for their own lives in Britain and they perceive the attempt to do so as being out of touch with modern reality.

Among the participants, closely-knit communities were seen as regulating and sanctioning a very limited range of appropriate behaviour through gossiping about them. The status of the parents within the community could be in danger when children deviate from the norm or don’t perform to the expected standard. The participants refused to take the family and the community views for granted, but instead reflected on them. By viewing some of their parents’ values as outdated and out of place, they were able to reject many of their parents’ values without compromising their Asian identity.

The meaning and boundaries of the ethnic community are constantly being renegotiated, revised and redefined, depending on the specific situations and set of circumstances that each individual or ethnic group encounters. The participants describe the creation of new forms of a Pan-Asian identity as due to the convergence of particular circumstances. This change offers new ways of participating in community life. Traditional sources of identity, which have been related to nationality, family, and geographic proximity, are now being replaced by more fluid identities based on the construction of lifestyle that express ethnicity: music, fashion, movies, are among building blocks of this new form of ethnicity.
4.3.6 Conclusion on South Asian identity

The purpose of this section was to explore the ways individuals, who are the second generation of South Asian families in Great Britain, perceive and describe their self-identity. To be able to answer this question I have explored what the social and cultural discourses are that are used by the participants to find inspiration when they construct their own South Asian identity. Do these individuals perceive the messages they get from the different cultural circles (religious, ethnic, national, global, etc.) as contradictory? If so, how do they deal with these contradictions? Finally, my intention was to find out what, if any, is the place of brands, possessions and commercial messages in the process of South Asian identity construction for these individuals?

I have discussed South Asian identity as a process of self-identification, self-understanding, social location and sense of commonality. The findings suggest that the participants are positioned between different voices. Sometimes they were very positive about their community, their family, religion or country of origins, sometimes they were not. Furthermore, the participants and the different cultural circles surrounding them were in constant change. Their everyday experience was one of continued negotiation with many changing circles. Based on this experience they were continuously revising and recreating their perceptions of self and others. Within this process identity was constructed and deconstructed. It emerges from the findings of this research that there is no single outcome of this negotiation process; each individual will experience different outcomes of these multiple negotiations.

In the conversation about South Asian identity the main discourses that have been identified were: the link to the country of origin, religion, and British South Asian community and family life. Each one of these discourses had internal conversations. Country of origin included discourses of roots, cultural inspiration and a feeling of detachment from the political culture. Religion included links to the global discourse of religion, ways of life and an entity to negotiate agency with. British South Asian community life was perceived as a source of support that engendered a sense of
belonging but at the same time was judgmental; through these dynamics we could see the development of new discourses such as the Pan-Asian community.

The argument I evaluate here is that the ways the participants describe their self-identity manifest essential characteristics that are the consequence of the social boundaries of their social group. In this section the focus was on the way they define their religious and ethnic identities. It is important to recognise that the categories that have been discussed up to this point were the categories the participants themselves have created, and were employed by them in their everyday social experience of their South Asian identity; these categories have been described in the summary of findings and include ethnicity, race, country of origin, religion, and more.

The findings of this section describe the participants as positioned simultaneously in relation to several kinds of social boundaries internal or external to their community. The South Asian identity of the participants appears to be full of competing voices including: traditionalist versus the rebel, detachment versus attachment to country of origins, religion versus ethnicity, observance of religious laws versus adopting a more pragmatic approach, following family and community code of behaviour versus asserting a more individual, westernised life style. Sometimes the participants look as though they struggle to agree with themselves what the community is that they refer to when they think about their own community. Each one of these voices is full of internal dialogues and contradictions that make any essentialist interpretation of them impossible. The participants of this research describe a continuous negotiation process about the content, meaning and direction of their ethnicity through their consumption practices thus creating a wide range of tastes and consumer identities.

Furthermore, social identities are constructed differentially, i.e. the individual needs the existence of externalities — or of ‘the Other’ to draw the border between his/her collective identity and the other group. Self-understanding is based on the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity with fellow group members and felt difference from, or even antipathy to, specified outsiders (this conceptualisation can be seen in structuralist discussion on race,
religion, ethnicity, nationalism, gender, and other phenomena described as involving collective identities). ‘The Other’, however, cannot be constructed as purely external to the desired identity, because then, as Laclau (1996) explains, it would not be significantly related to it: it would become ‘just another difference’.

The idea of a bounded community appears problematic within the context of an increasingly globalised world. Particularly, it is the notion of boundedness which current processes of globalisation have put into question (Tambakaki, 2006). Drawing boundaries of community becomes increasingly undermined by the intensification and multiplication of border crossing, interactions, and networks. Consequently the notion of community itself becomes questionable. Perceiving oneself as a part of community involves a sense of collectivity, a ‘we consciousness’. Associated with perceptions of homogeneity, the community appears in the first instance contestable as an idea, and perhaps even outdated. It seems contestable because the bond that holds the community together seems increasingly difficult to maintain.

Finally I would like to claim that as the result of post-industrial social and cultural changes, socialisation that is based on value consensus is very hard to find and becomes an ambiguous process. As Hutnic and Barret (2003, p.1) note: ‘Even if the symbolic meanings often demarcate relatively rigid boundaries for individual self-expression; yet the situated self-understanding is still never fully delineated by the socio-symbolic logic of identification’. If we want to relate symbolic identification to the reflexive agent, we should rather emphasise that the self-understanding of the person can never be fully inscribed into a total description. This is because the act of self-understanding, or self-reflection, is dependent on the spontaneous act of the person her/himself, and can thus never be limited by a general classification.
4.4 **British Identity**

Traditionally, social sciences and marketing literature have approached the subject of identification of ethnic minorities with the host society from the ‘melting pot’ (Park and Burges, 1921) perspective. This approach claims that eventually the immigrant group will assimilate to the host society. The assimilation concept describes a process of immigration that moves from ‘accommodation’ at the first stage, where the immigrant adjusts to the new culture, and then to the ‘assimilation’ stage in which ‘persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in common cultural life’ (Park and Burges, 1921, p.17).

Hofstede (1991) has offered his support to this view; he believes that the superiority of national culture will pressurise ethnic minorities to conform to society’s value system. This approach claims the predominance of national cultures over the long term. Hofstede’s assimilation process begins when the first generation experiences cultural clashes with the host culture and this is then passed on to the following generations who will mostly be absorbed into the host country population and assume their values.

The assimilation approach tends to describe the ethnic consumer as effectively adjusting to their new surroundings using all ‘socialisation agents’ (Park, 1915) such as schools, work, popular culture, and others as positive models to learn the new ways of life and avoid the unpleasant consequences of not conforming to the values that are consensually shared in the host society. If they did try to get away from these structures, they could get hurt: psychologically, socially, financially, and physically (Firat and Dholakia, 2005).

In contradiction to the melting pot predictions, many marketing scholars such as Penaloza (1994), Oswald (1999) and Lindridge *et al.* (2004) and others claim that consumers do not always assimilate into the host society. One of the main models they base their work on is taken from Berry (1980) who suggests four possible acculturation outcomes:
• Assimilation – when individuals in the non-dominant culture do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures.
• Integration – there is an interest in maintaining one’s original culture while in daily interaction with other groups.
• Separation or segregation is when the individual places a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wishes to avoid interaction with others.
• Marginalisation – is if there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often as a result of enforced cultural loss) and little interest in having relationships with others (often for the reason of exclusion or discrimination). In the case of marginalisation, people rarely choose such an option, rather they become marginalised as a result of an attempt at forced assimilation combined with forced exclusion.

Similarly, Askegaard et al. (2000), have identified four identity positions that Greenlandic immigrants in Denmark subscribe to:

• ‘Greenlandic hyper-culture’, that idealises the culture of origin in the immigrant environment
• The ‘oscillating pendulum’, where these individuals experience a split in identity between the two cultures, i.e. both the alienation and attraction of Greenland and Denmark,
• The ‘Danish cookie’, an assimilationist position that describes full absorption into the host culture and, finally,
• The ‘best of both worlds’ where the immigrant comes to terms with their double identity.

Marketing literature has applied the concept of acculturation to investigate the consumption pattern of ethnic consumers (for example: Berry, 1980, 1997; Laroche, Hui, and Kim 1991; Khairullah, 1999; Lee, 1993; Lee and Tse, 1994; Jamal, 1996; Chapman and Jamal, 1997; Ownbey and Horridge, 1997; Penaloza, 1994; Lindridge et al. 2004; Askegaard et al., 2005). Two main themes have emerged out of this literature; one claims that the extent to which ethnic individuals adopt the mainstream consumer culture environment will inform their consumer buying behaviours. The other compares consumption patterns of different ethnic groups and compares these groups to the more generic, mainstream ‘White’ or ‘Anglo’

Jamal and Chapman (2000) suggest that there is no ‘single’ everlasting outcome of acculturation. In their research, they demonstrate that a British-Indian individual could be described as ‘segregated’ at one moment of their life but could also be described as ‘assimilated’ in other moments of their life depending upon how they experience their phenomenal world in a given moment. Similarly a person who is designated as ‘highly acculturated’ could also engage in consumption activities that reflect his/her strong affiliation and identification with her/his culture of origin.

Indeed, empirical research has found that the acculturation process does have an influence on consumer behaviour (for example, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004; Lindridge 2001; D’Rozario and Douglas, 1999; Khairullah and Khairullah, 1999). However, no systematic account exists that explains why and how acculturation influences consumer behaviour. Such systematic explanation is imperative if we desire a true understanding of the acculturation process and its influence on consumer behaviour. I would like to claim that consumer research should go beyond the mere observation that acculturating individuals do exhibit different consumer behaviours and explore the mechanisms that lead to such differences.

The discussion on acculturation is about setting boundaries between two cultural groups. These boundaries locate the parameters of difference and sameness. Those with whom we share an identity are marked out as the same, in contrast to those who are different. Sameness is featured by the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ and ‘our’ pronouns which draw in those with whom the identity is shared and exclude those who are characterised as ‘others’ (Woodward, 2002). Establishing secure boundaries involves naming those who are included and those who are excluded. Laying claim to an identity involves being named and being able to name the ‘other’, for example ‘Asian’ as ‘Us’ and ‘British’ as ‘Other’.
This description of well-defined cultural groups that internally hold a ‘value consensus’ (Park, 1915) is in line with interpretive models. These models view consumers as a mass, being manipulated by their culture (for example McCracken, 1986). Arnould and Price (2000, p.140) explain that: ‘Consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets’. Culture offers us the blueprint for action and gives us information about what is meaningful or important; it helps us to find our place-in-the-world in relation to others.

My aim here is to challenge this essentialist view and offer an alternative view. In line with Davies and Harre (1990), I would like to suggest that personal order is indeed derived from social order but is not isomorphic with it. According to this view a person is a site where flows of meaning-making through discursive practices (Hodge and Kress, 1988) become organised. However, this organisation is not fixed, there are numerous discourses in the market, representing given particularities; these claim their rights to construe the social, i.e. the consumer has to be considered within that network of determination. This description is in line with Laclau (1996), who does not see the individual as merely a locus, or position within the discourse. He maintains instead that the subject is situated in between discursive practices; none of them is capable of identifying the subject ‘totally’ (a similar concept is presented by Lacan, 2006).

Social actors understand and experience their social identity, their social world and their place in it discursively. In the context of this section, I would like to claim that the participants experience British identity through the choices they make between many discourses available to them. The particular strength of this anti-essentialist explanation is that it recognises that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices available. Discourses can compete with each other or they can create distinct and incompatible versions of reality. My research findings reveal numerous discourses dealing with British society and British life; each one of them is representing given particularities, which claim their rights to construe the British
identity of the participants. The next part of this section will explore these discourses. My concern here is to examine participants’ understandings and constructions of ‘Britishness’.

4.4.1 Models of British identity

Social sciences literature offers different models to explain national identity. For example, Smith (1991) identifies two models of national identity: civic and ethnic. The civic model is based on a political community in which its members are brought together with all the legal and civic rights of citizenship, irrespective of ethnic background. The ethnic model, on the other hand, is based primarily on roots and the common history of its members. Smith (1991, p.17) also suggests that there are five fundamental features of a national identity, with different subsets emphasised in the civic vs. ethnic models. These are: link to historic territory, common myths and historical memories, common culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility for the members of the national group. As well as these features, Barrett et al. (2004) suggest additional features. Some of these are cognitive, such as categorising oneself as part of a national group, having knowledge of national emblems, beliefs about common descent and kinship of group members, and beliefs about group characteristics/traits of the national group. Barrett also identifies affective components of national identity, such as the subjective importance of the identity to the individual, and the emotional attachment to the national group.

In relation to the affective features of national identity, Kelman (1997) suggests that people may display two types of attachments. The first is sentimental, where the attachment is emotional and people feel that the group reflects their personal identity. The second is instrumental, and is focused more on the idea of the nation meeting the needs, interests and obligations that accompany citizenship and membership of the national group.
In the more specific context of British Asian’s sense of Britishness, Jacobson (1997, p.20) claims that the national identity of his participants did not have a fixed content, but was in fact related to ‘boundaries’. The three boundaries he has identified were the: ‘civic’, ‘racial’ and ‘culture’ boundaries. The first refers to the political identity of Britain. Since it is based on citizenship, it encompasses most members of minority groups, and is relatively clear-cut. The second ‘boundary’ is the ‘racial’ that defines those with local roots as British. Britishness is inevitably seen as a matter of having ancestral roots, and consequently as being ‘white’. This makes it difficult for visible minorities to identify within this boundary. The final boundary, which is the cultural boundary, defined Britishness as ‘those individuals whose behaviour, lifestyle and values are perceived as typically British’ (Jacobson, 1997, p.193). Jacobson does not offer a clear definition of what is meant by ‘typically British’ as this term can be understood differently in different sections of British society.

Vadher and Barrett (2006) have developed Jacobson’s model in an attempt to offer a more sophisticated model that overcomes Jacobson’s weaknesses. They have offered six dimensions of national identity: Racial, historical, civic/state, instrumental, lifestyle and the multicultural. This framework will be the used to guide the exploration of the different discourses that emerge from the findings of my research.

4.4.2 The civic/state of Britain

The civic/state discourse is based on a community in which its members are brought together with all the legal and the rights of citizenship, irrespective of ethnic background (Vadher and Barrett, 2006). For the participants, this means that their British identity is based on being born in Britain and perceiving it as a place of residency only. This identity lacks any sense of British national identity. This can be exemplified by Summayah’s reply to the question about her British identity

‘Q: Do you feel British?
A: Yes, I don’t know ...
Q: would you feel better to define yourself British Pakistani?
A: I don’t know to be honest. I don’t really want to be defined as a nationalist sort of ...
’ (Summayah75-79).
Being “British citizen” means for most of the participants simply acknowledging objective circumstances such as residency, passport ownership, or law system. This is the case with Sonia who defines her British identity clearly based on her owning a British passport:

‘Q Do you regard yourself British?
A I don’t, I don’t really. ... Pakistani... like I wouldn’t... I wouldn’t... define myself British, I have a British passport’ (Sonia 772-774).

It is interesting to note that Sonia sees her local identity, being from Burton on Trent, together with her Muslim identity as more important and emotionally relevant than the ‘supra’ British identity. Sonia explains: ‘That’s my religion, which I follow and believe in. I’m from Burton as you can see on the map there (see self-identity collage below). I was born there, bred there, everything there and I am going to married to a guy from Burton so everything is going to be in Burton’ (Sonia 86-89).

Figure 4.17 Burton in Sonia’s self-identity collage

The only participant that dedicated a space for British national identity in her self-identity collage was Anissa, a Muslim British Pakistani participant. Anissa brings the British flag and the Pakistani flag together (see below):
The appearance of the two flags in Anissa’s collage does not necessarily demonstrate strong dual national identity as she is one of the most vocal participants who expresses feelings of alienations from British society and especially from the British government’s policy.

Maxwell (2006) offers an explanation relevant to this stand of the participants about British national identity. He explains that since the late 1980s ethnic minority politics in Britain have shifted from ‘Black’ politics of inclusion and equality to Muslim and South Asian demands for distinct religious and cultural rights. Some commentators (for example, Ansari, 2005) link this rise of Muslim and South Asian politics to their growing economic and social isolation and use the summer 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, and the more recent London terrorist attacks on July 7th and July 21st 2005 as examples of the dangers of poor, religiously alienated and politically radicalized Muslim and South Asian communities.

Public discourse claims that Muslims and South Asians are alienated from mainstream Britain because they live in poor ethnic ghettos, participate in non-mainstream religions, and politically organise via ethnically and religiously motivated networks (Leiken, 2005; Reiff, 2005).

I would like to support Maxwell’s claim that there is not necessarily a binary tradeoff between identification with the national mainstream and involvement in ethnic and religious communities. Maxwell (2006) demonstrates that despite retaining ethnic
and religious networks, South Asians have also actively built integrated networks and consider themselves part of the larger British community. He claims that Muslims and South Asians show that they believe in mainstream political institutions and are more likely to identify as British as a result of political participation.

Maxwell’s findings suggest that South Asians are ideologically invested in mainstream British politics. He shows that South Asian participants’ trust in parliament and local councils is higher than that of white British. According to his findings, only 4% of white British have a ‘lot of trust’ in parliament compared to 16% of Pakistanis and 14% of Indians. Only 6% of white have a ‘lot of trust’ in local council compared to 12% of Indians and 15% of Pakistanis.

This positive approach of Pakistanis and Indians can be explained, as the result of comparing the political system of the country of origin of their parents to the British political system. The participants feel that in India and Pakistan politics were less safe, less transparent, not as effective and more corrupted than the British political system.

Bally (British-Indian) discusses the corruption in India:

India is a country, where money talks. If you really wanted to, I know it sounds silly, but you could literally you could knock someone over, police could even see you they’re not really going to arrest you if you give them money, or a certain amount of money. It’s like the mentality. I don’t like that in terms of as long as you’ve got money you’ve got status. You know someone who is high in the police department very little is going to happen to you no matter what you do. So it’s like, I wouldn’t say its lawless but there’s that feeling of um I don’t know. Yeah mentality. I mean I couldn’t associate myself with that mentality. I wouldn’t be associated with that. (Bally 901-916)

Nisha speaks about the contrast between the political culture of India and England: ‘When you come back to England, you know the day you get off the aeroplane come back to England it is a big contrast and you know everything’s in order on the roads, you’re going in a straight line rather than, going over the kerb or, something like that. (Nisha 891-895).
Jaz, British-Indian participant, feels that England is a much safer place for women, she says:

It’s not safe there [India], it’s not safe like for a women, women if they go past a, a group of boys you can just see the fear in their eye, fear in, you can just see the fear because they’ll walk past and put their head down and carry on walking really really fast and the boys are shouting things at the girls, and, like I just thought that’s so wrong because you don’t get, you do get some stupid people, but you don’t get it as often here, you can walk the street with your head up high, you don’t have to worry about somebody, shouting abuse at you or, or you know you don’t have to fear for anything, Whereas there I just feel like girls not safe out, on her own, here you can pop out to the shop late at night, there I don’t think you can, not for a girl on her own. (Jaz 1047-1056)

It seems that the second generation of British South Asians would identify with aspects of British society, whilst rejecting the idea of ‘being British’. Modood et al. (1994) argue that this is because they actively participate in important aspects of British society, yet reserve the term ‘British’ for the features with which they cannot, or feel that they are not allowed to, identify. (Modood et al., 1994). Raswan, British Pakistani participant, summarises these conflicting voices regarding British nationality:

A  ... there’s rules and regulations that I like being in Britain being ... British...
Q  Give me an example please of what you mean?
A  Err the, the government err the policing the things that...
Q  The way they run the country?
A  The way they run the country you know it, it, its I think it’s, it’s a good way to run a country err and err but then there’s certain things that you err now think you don’t like now these days err its difficult so it’s the other things that are coming now at this point of stage it’s all about extremists and all this which is not, not good because it’s now looking at every Muslim or every Asian looking at they’re, they’re doing the ... now which is not good. (Raswan 845-857)
4.4.3 **Instrumental link to Britain**

In their work on national identity, Kroneberg and Wimmer (2011) explore the conditions that lead to the creation of national identity. The authors describe national identity as the result of exchange relationships between state, social elites, and the wider population (p.14). They explain that social actors, (ethnic groups are an important part of these actors), seek coalitions that grant them the most advantageous exchange relationship with the state (see figure 4.19 below).

**Figure 4.19 National identity model**

![National identity model](image)

Notes: cE = central elites, pE = peripheral elites, cM = central masses, pM = peripheral masses.

This exchange relationship determines which actor prefers which of the possible alliance systems described above (nation building, ethnic closure, etc.). Actors can choose not only what to exchange, but also with whom. They want to keep those who offer the same resources at arm’s length (because competition depresses prizes) and on the other hand get what they want from as many sources as possible (because a supply monopoly increases prizes). The individual prefers those exchange systems from which they gain the most (Kroneberg and Wimmer, 2011, p. 14).

Based on this understanding, we can claim that what Britain represents for the second generation South Asian can be understood in terms of benefits and services. This instrumental discourse differs from the state discourse, as it regards the notion
of Britishness as more than just the right to reside in Britain. Being British was evaluated along the dimensions of meeting personal needs and interests. Sonia, a British-Pakistani participant, demonstrates this way of thinking. She says:

I have British degree, yeah with a British degree I’m allowed to work anywhere, with a Pakistani degree, it’s nothing, some aspects, academics it’s excellent here, Pakistani academics are not all that, I don’t think so, I’ve always I’ve never located a British bit, I’ve always thought, I’m born and bred here I think I’m glad I’m born and bred here, when you look in the news and there’s so many government problems and things like that, our government is quite supportive, and they wouldn’t let us die here, when in some countries they would and I’m grateful for that. (Sonia 781-792)

Ali, British Pakistani participant, repeats this notion in his self-identity collage. For Ali, a British passport is the key to all the places he wants to visit in the world:

Figure 4.20- Instrumental England in Ali’s self-identity collage

Within this category, there is more engagement with, and participation in, the national group. For some, it involved a comparative dimension between Britain and their parents’ countries of origin, and a sense of pride derived from the fact that such opportunities allow them to benefit and achieve more in their careers, education and financially.
4.4.4 Link to British history

Only two participants mentioned history as part of their self-identity discussion. It was Pakistani history they were talking about rather than British.

Asim was talking about the Pakistani-Indian conflict and he says: ‘Yeah back home there were always conflicts that are due to mainly land debates between Pakistan and India. They’ve always got a debate about something’. (Asim 924-925).

Ali describes the roots of his family before immigrating to Pakistan linking it to the Muslim Shia discourse: ‘If someone asked me where’s your dad from or where’s your mum from I’ll say well my dad’s dad migrated from Iran and this is my history. So yeah I mean, Pakistani history is not a part that reflects me (Ali 264-266).

National history is nevertheless a very important discourse. Individuals need a national, historical or even mythological narrative about the nation to be able to develop a national identity (Kroneberg and Wimmer, 2011), or perhaps to hold a more emotional attachment to the nation. If identification with being British is based on historical bonds, or if such aspects are needed to create a sense of national identity, this, like racial discourse, is an exclusive category. It seems that the participants struggle to develop a national identity based on the idea of a common history as for them such an association is not possible.

Rather than accepting the discourse of British history some of the participants would like to see recognition of South Asian history by the British society. They said that they would like the National Curriculum of the schools in Britain to recognise Britain as a multicultural society and give a space to other cultures. For example, Nisha describes her expectations regarding history teaching.

A Things like history lessons you would probably be told more about the English background than you would India. I mean I wouldn’t expect to talk about India or any other background but you know.

Q Would you like to have kind of an option to learn about more your tradition, more your history?

A Yeah a little bit. I mean I’d like to know about the English one anyway because it’s just interesting but yeah I would have liked the option to learn
about my own a bit. Because I’m sure in America they have things for, for coloured people they have a special one don’t they. I think it’s called Black History or something like that for them. (Nisha 1500-1510)

4.4.5 Race and British identity

Ariane Sherine (The Guardian 3rd March 2010) says:

‘It may not be racist, but it’s a question I’m tired of hearing. Looking a bit brown still means being asked where you’re from’. She describes:
Last weekend, I had the conversation for the 3,897th time – and this time, it took place in central London just two roads away from the hospital where I was born. As usual, it went like this:

Stranger: Where are you from? [Translation: You look a bit brown. Why are you brown?]
Me: London.
Stranger: No, where are you really from? [Translation: You are clearly telling me untruths. Brown people do not come from London.]
Me: London.
Stranger (exasperated): No, where are your parents from? [Translation: Now you’re just being obtuse.]
Me: Africa and America.
Stranger (confused): Erm ... so where are your family from, like, back in the day? [Translation: People who come from Africa and America do not look like you.]
Me: Iran, India, Africa, America and England.
Stranger (relieved): India and Iran! Do you ever go back?

At this point, I have to explain that it’s hard to go back to somewhere you have never been. I’ve lived in London since I was a zygote, have a London accent and don’t speak any languages except English – yet just because I’m cashew-coloured, I’m often questioned about my heritage. Over the last five years, I’ve been asked: “What’s your caste?” (I haven’t broken any bones); “Do you go to temple?” (only on my way to Embankment); and “Do you need special food?” (as though the answer’s going to be: “Yes, St Peter isn’t going to let me in if I’ve munched on a bit of dead pig/cow/giraffe.

Ariane’s description focuses on the experience of growing up and being socialised within a racialised society. The uncertainty about British identity that has been discussed until now is magnified if we take in consideration that South Asians are a visible minority. The participants feel that because of this visible difference they are not perceived by mainstream society as British. The participants describe feelings of exclusion, based on their skin colour and religious background.
The participants perceive the British nation as including only those with a white ancestry. According to this perception, to be British is to be ‘white’. Bally says: ‘Yeah that’s what I mean. I think it’s just a sense of being white and British. I think certain people find it hard to accept anything different basically if you are not white and British. That’s the thing, yeah, if you’re not white and British so you’re not what you should be in a sense’ (Bally 1542-1547).

Anissa describes the effect of this sense of exclusion on her behaviour:

Q: Because of your skin colour?
A: Yeah. But in a classroom there is 30 people and there is only like two Asian people or three Asian people in the classroom you do kind of feel like the minority. You are the minority but you just feel really scared... (Anissa 428-434).

In another occasion Anissa says:

Plus I think if you look different, because obviously the colour of my skin, because a lot of um let’s say someone from France came to England, maybe if someone didn’t speak to them they could kind of like easily blend in. They probably do have a different look but they still are white if you know what I am trying to say. Or someone from Australia or America white came they probably would easily fit in (Anissa 595-601).

Anu describes how this feeling of vulnerability translates into her fashion consumption.

I think the layering is really important. I think that is a protection thing I think. I think if I am wearing something that isn’t layered that connotes sort of vulnerability and like more, reveals who I am more. I am the kind of person that, I can’t really explain it ... I think if I don’t layer I feel like I am revealing too much of myself and I feel that I am vulnerable. When I am layered with lots of clothes, different sort of like even though it might just be a sweater on top of this that just makes me feel I am more sort of protected. I couldn’t just wear this and go outside. You know it would be my security to take two or three things with me. I think also it is how I dress but I also feel it is a psychological thing I think anyway because I wouldn’t feel comfortable to go out just like this unless I had like a matching scarf with it or something that would enclose this part. (Anu 357-366)
The participants felt that they were not accepted as British perhaps because they did not fit into the racial category of being British, or more specifically, that they did not represent the prototypical British person. Sue and Sue (2003) state that variables such as the perception and attitude of the host society and the experiences of discrimination have a strong impact on the acculturative experience of second-generation immigrants. Their study reflects how the participants struggle with integration through constant evaluations by the dominant society. The findings of my research confirm this claim and show that racism continues to be encountered by second generation South Asian participants. This reality challenges their wish to feel accepted by white British society:

Bally says: ‘I think other people in this country don’t see me as British so... More importantly there is a divide’ (Bally 1740-1741). Sonia describes a strong sense of difference following the terror attack of the 7th of July:

There were one or two occasions when they would just say, “you are a terrorist”. Or sometimes you go into a shop, I think they think maybe you are going to leave a bag there, maybe a bomb there or something. It’s like people you know, grown up with, people you have gone to their shops, gone down their streets. Now they are looking through a curtain just to see if you are doing something weird. And it hurts because you think you know them people but instead they are just judging you. (Sonia 630-640)

Samera describes her experience of feeling judged by university staff in her university: ‘Yeah because a lot of people like in uni as well, you know library downstairs someone did, guys that work there, we have these discussions about religion and they think oh you know because we wear the headscarf it is because we are oppressed or something but that is not it’ (Samera 352-355).

Ali has described his experience in public transport: ‘It is so over there people would knock on the bus window and like you know sometimes just getting off the bus they will just shout ‘Paki’ at me ’ (482-483).

The main narrative that comes from the participants’ story is that they sometimes feel discriminated against but want to be acknowledged as British. Yet racists were seen to ‘remind them who they are’ in Bally’s words, and British society will not
accept them as they are.

Anissa explains:

There was a debate about... you know... a while ago about knowing your neighbours and stuff and... you know... and I can remember watching a TV programme and the woman was saying I don’t know who my neighbours are they are Muslim, but I don’t know who they are. And all we like say is like hello there is no more than that. But then you think well why don’t you make the effort, why does it always have to be the minority making the effort why can’t the majority make the effort. I don’t know if it makes sense or not. (Anissa 1094-1100)

There is recognition between the participants that white British are not made of one homogenic group and all the participants described positive experiences with white friends.

‘Then it makes you think well, you’ve got white English friends which aren’t racist to you, and that makes them feel like, you know they’re being penalised but it’s not, so it’s kind of, it’s a delicate situation’ (Jaz 932-935).

‘Yeah, I quite like that they are not just doing in a separate, rigid way. They are exploring the culture and they are going around appreciating other cultures around them, respecting them. I really value that and I think it’s good’ (Summayah).

‘Because I’ve got a lot of white friends and I mean they might joke about this that and the other but deep down I wouldn’t consider them to be racist or that racially motivated’ (Bally 1577-1580).

4.4.6 Multicultural Britain

The consequences of post colonial immigration, the movement of populations, the mixing of cultures are individuals who live a ‘fused’ life, their life styles reflect a variety of cultures, and they can’t be defined solely by their ethnic descent or any other group (Hall, 1992; Bhabba, 1994). Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) explain that the terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘multicultural society’ are used to indicate social change – ‘the altered ethnic composition of the population’ (p.7). Global cultural, social and economic trends have changed what was, allegedly, a rather homogenous
population into a more heterogeneous one. The host society has witnessed the arrival of ‘foreign’ cultural practices, new religious practices and lifestyles. Consequently, aspects of the host culture have changed as well.

Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) claim that there are no ‘pure’ or ‘original’ cultures, but each culture has incorporated elements of other cultures. Cultures are seen as the result of interaction with one another; therefore culture is a process of continuous change. This change goes in both directions; inward from the host society to the ethnic group, for example, Asim describes the influence of the host society on his self-identity: ‘End of the day you are being bought up in this country so you’ve got some of their values. You’ve got some of their culture, some of their dress sense’ (65). The change also goes outward where the cultures of immigrants are seen as enriching the cultures of the host societies. The participants describe how they see some aspects of their culture (fashion, food, lifestyles) enrich the host culture. For example Nisha describes how the acceptance of ethnic elements into British fashion makes her feel proud of her heritage:

I mean things like, I’ve not got them on now but things like bangles, and things like that... they have actually come into fashion [in England] here not long ago, people wearing all bangles, all sort of colours, and big earrings and, you know the Indian shoes as well they came in...Yeah, they definitely came in about, and I did enjoy wearing them with jeans and things like that...To be honest, if these shoes weren’t in, I probably wouldn’t wear them, or if the bangles weren’t in I probably wouldn’t wear them, even though I’m, you I know like I said I like to be individual, I still kind of look at what people wear it’s, it’s just kind of, I’m kind of in the middle somewhere, so people aren’t wearing bangles I probably wouldn’t wear it, I suppose with the shoes, and the earrings and things like that, so it is kind of to fit in really, you know and because I’m an Indian, and those are in fashion, I can make more of it because, you know, I might have those lying around at home, than what other people might...Yeah so I’ll wear it and show everybody. (Nisha 752-765)

The literature on race, citizenship and multiculturalism has tended to discuss the concept of multiculturalism at the level of national rights and obligations (for example Torres et al., 1999) whether individual or collective. My emphasis, in contrast, falls on everyday lived experiences and local negotiations of difference. Members of society meaningfully interact with distinctive individual and
interpersonal experiences. My intention is to privilege everyday activities and routines as the central site of identity and attitude formation. The argument here is that acculturation is not a ‘one-time-only’ affair, but is continually negotiated, and may vary over the individual’s lifetime.

The influence of peers is an important issue that many studies of assimilation and acculturation address (for example, Gibson, 1988; Waters, 1994, Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Berry et al., 2006) as one of the variables, among a host of others that influence acculturation.

This idea that individuals acculturate to a ‘host society’ as a whole or British culture in the abstract is problematic. In their criticism of the concept of assimilation, Kasinitz et al. (2004) argue that the interactions between groups surely must play out through individuals, especially through peers. Peers are important to the creating of these new cultural forms. The participants describe a very wide range of ethnicities and cultures in their social circles. All of them have white British friends, either as close friends or as work mates or co-students. Harris (1998) and Milner (2004) claim that South Asian peer groups variously include: ‘immigrants and non-immigrants, co-ethnics and non-co-ethnics, co-religionists and non-coreligionists’ (Milner, 2004).

For example, Sanetta says: Most of my friends are white and not of my own religion. It just happens to be like that (137-138) I tend to go towards people who are more appreciative of who you are as an individual. (145-147). Later she expresses the same idea in different words: ‘With this bunch (pointing to the photos of her white friends fig. 4.22), I’m more chilled out, relaxed. You can act stupid around them and they won’t judge you’ (Sanetta 248-250).
These white British peers have a strong (sometimes, conflicting) influence upon the acculturating behaviour patterns of the participants. For example Sonia who has a very strong sense of Muslim identification and expresses attachment to the Pakistani community tells about her friendship with one of the white British girls in her school:

So I have never, ever had a mentality where I have to stick with my Pakistani friends. If they were under achieving and I was over achieving I would leave them and go with whoever is over achieving. That’s why until year six my best friend was, no until year nine actually, the secondary, to my SATS, my best friend was a white person because she was very intelligent and my father said- you know you are going to stick with someone that you can be level to. Because a lot of Asian people didn’t really care, they were messing around; they were like oh school it doesn’t matter. But I’m not from a family like that I have to do my studies first. (Sonia 349-362)

The discourse of multiculturalism within the British identity discourses remains the broadest and most inclusive of all. Since cultural homogeneity of a national group is no longer necessary, the British category allows for inclusion of all ethnic groups, whilst also allowing for the maintenance of individual values and beliefs.

Multiculturalism was seen by all the participants as something positive and good not only because it allowed those with various ethnic backgrounds to be included, but also because it may help to break down barriers of racism, by acknowledging the makeup of British cities and the acceptance of the cultural differences between people.
I do believe that it does help to some extent because in a sense its finding more common things in a way although you've already got a lot of things in common you were born in the same place you probably live in the same place but it’s in a sense taken away from. It's not taking away the sovereignty in a sense because obviously I think people, I believe it’s more how maybe white people, certain white people I said before see themselves in a sense. The majority won’t have a problem but the ones that do in a sense it is something that obviously could maybe, I mean those same people maybe listen to hip hop, maybe got away from their way of thinking maybe slightly more global thinking doing different things. And then maybe it becomes more of a situation where they become more understanding. That’s the way I can see it can be a good thing. Sharing tasters of music and lifestyle, things like that can help. (Bally 1679-1695)

Ali describes his circles of friends:

It is just having the right friends with you. That is something that you know gets me going. I have a lot of friends but my best friends are people that I talk to, that are limited, there are about four or five people that I talk to. That if I’ve got something on my mind I will talk to them not my family because I think I don’t want to you know get them worried. That’s my way of thinking it may be wrong, it may be right I don’t know. See I’ve got Adam he is Jewish, he is based in London at the moment but he has. Yeah he has done a lot of stuff near Rochdale. I’ve known him since ‘96. I speak to his family once a month because I just check up on them because I am the closest one out of him. Because he’s at the place that I just call up to see how they are and if they need anything. He does the same with me, or with my family. Then I’ve got Razwan he is Pakistani Sunni. I’ve known him since we were kids, we used to live on the same street. Him and Adam are like. We’ve kind of like, he got to know Adam through me so we’ve bonded, us three have bonded like brothers. (Ali 230-242)

However, the idea of multiculturalism does not necessarily mean a shared set of values or beliefs among people. The participants express feelings of alienation from some of the British ways of life and values: for example Jaz express her disapproval of British white women’s public behaviour: ‘In this culture they do go round, girls go out whenever they want and, you know you do whatever you want, you wear whatever you want (Jaz 100-103).

Mirza feels that white British will not understand his culture and their way of life is far from his.
If a white man comes in and sits with me to Shisha, there’s this one good friend I know in London, he’ll come and sit with me, eat curry, and smoke Shisha and watch, he’ll watch Indian films as well, so basically, if they’re willing to adapt with my, in my circle, not the circle I join to, in my circle, that’s fair enough, I don’t mind, but because you’ve got to remember that, the most white people today, they drink, they go out they sleep around, they go clubbing, I don’t do that, you see, so that’s why. (Mirza 1011-1017)

Asim feels that life priorities of his white peers are very different to his:

In terms of drinking and they do a lot of clubbing, I think they spend all their money clubbing. They do that every Friday night in this country right. It’s a lot of money, they are always skint. Like on Friday night what they do – let’s go clubbing for the weekend. It’s like that every week. You ask you friend what you doing this weekend and – I’m going clubbing again. So it’s like where ours is different; clubbing maybe one week. Maybe next week we’ll do something else watch maybe a movie or something. (Asim 923-931)

Asim goes on and express his disapproval of white British family values. He says:

Family life will be different from English people as well I think they spend all their money clubbing. They do that every Friday night in this country right. It’s a lot of money, they are always skint. Like on Friday night what they do – let’s go clubbing for the weekend. It’s like that every week. You ask you friend what you doing this weekend and – I’m going clubbing again. So it’s like where ours is different; clubbing maybe one week. Maybe next week we’ll do something else watch maybe a movie or something. (Asim 923-931)

Family life will be different from English people as well I think in Asian families there is more close knit families simply because if you go back home you don’t see much old people’s homes. Whereas, here, you’ve got old people’s homes everywhere. Whereas people put their parents in a little bungalow maybe if they are lucky. Where I live opposite me is old people’s homes and they are all English and you come to someone, obviously we talk with our neighbours. And some of them will say our children meet us probably on Christmas, maybe once every two months and you think to yourself you know how sad is this. With Asian families always live with their parents …. I’ve never came across an Asian couple that have been put in an old people’s home (Asim 1055-1080).

4.4.6.1 Globalisation

Globalisation has existed for many centuries as a process by which cultures influence one another and become more alike through trade, immigration, and the exchange of information and ideas. However, in recent decades, the degree and intensity of the connections among different cultures and different world regions have accelerated dramatically because of advances in tele-communications and a rapid increase in economic and financial interdependence worldwide. Consequently, in recent years, globalisation has become one of the most widely used terms to describe the current state of the world.
Several of the most prominent writers on globalisation have argued that many children and adolescents now grow up with a global consciousness. According to Giddens (1991, p.187), children and adolescents have ‘phenomenal worlds [that are] for the most part truly global’. Robertson (1992, p.8) argued that children today gradually develop ‘the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole’. Tomlinson (1999, p.30) wrote that the world as a whole ‘increasingly exists as a cultural horizon within which we (to varying degrees) frame our existence’.

From a self-identity perspective, this outcome of globalisation can be usefully conceptualised in terms of multicultural identities (Arnett, 2002). What it means in this context is that in addition to their local identity, individuals develop a global identity that gives them a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture and includes an awareness of the events, practices, styles, and information that are part of the global culture. Mass media is crucial in the process of developing a global identity, because it provides exposure to people, events, and information from all over the world. This process makes ethnic identity formation even more complicated. Hermans and Kempen, (1998) explain that they may develop identities that combine their culture of origin, the local culture to which they have immigrated, and the global culture, thus leading to a multicultural identity. They describe this new identity as one in which, ‘different and contrasting cultures can be part of a repertoire of collective voices playing their part in a multivoiced self’ (Harmans and Kempen, 1998, p. 1118).

Ali (British Muslim) is a good example of a multivocal self. Ali identifies himself with the Muslim Pakistani discourse. As we have seen before, he is very proud of his family origins in Iran; as he describes it: ‘If someone asked me where are you from I’ll say well my dad’s dad migrated from Iran’ (264-266). As part of his Muslim identity he did not support the war against Iraq: ‘So basically, as soon as the death toll of civilians started rising up and soldiers being killed I have said enough is enough’ (Ali 672-674). However, parallel to the Muslim Pakistani discourse Ali links himself to the western/American discourse of air force pilots as popularised in Hollywood films such as ‘Top Gun’ or ‘An Officer and a Gentleman See fig 4.23.
Ali says: ‘I would like to be in the army [British army] because I always wanted to go in the Air Force (800-802). And then he describes his plan to buy a motorbike: ‘am trying to buy a motorbike ... I am looking at a Honda, a Honda CR ... It is a sports one I don’t want the normal one I want the sports one ... . It is big, it is the look that attracts me (855-864).

In a globalising world society, individuals and groups are no longer located in one particular culture, homogeneous in itself and contrastingly set against other cultures, but are increasingly living in multicultural space (Appadurai, 1994; Hermans and Kempen, 1998; Raggatt, 2000; Spiro, 1993; Wolf, 1982). The increasing interconnectedness of nations and cultures not only leads to increasing contacts between individuals from different cultural backgrounds but also to increasing contacts between cultures within the individual. Different cultures come together and meet each other within the self of one and the same individual.

Bally provides another good example of a multivocal self; he talks about two dominant discourses dominating his self-perception. On one occasion he describes his involvement with his Indian Sikh heritage. He says:

My Asian friends are probably even more westernised then me because I probably understand my religion and speak more fluently and have a better understanding and probably do things probably more traditional than others would. Like I play Indian instruments most of them probably don’t even know how to say it rather than play it. (Bally 1272-1279)

In his self-identity collage he shows India as important place in his life
However, on another occasion Bally shows the deep influence of an Eastern Asian (Chinese-Japanese) philosophy of martial arts on his life. He identifies the book Art of War (fig. 4.24 below) by the Chinese writer Sun Tzu as the most important book in his life.

Bally: This is the most influential book in my life, I actually came across, it was a bit more random. I always heard of the name Art of War, which sounded obviously just interesting Art of War and I read like a little bit about it. And it was basically the philosophies, it can be applied to all parts of life really it’s not literally just for war. But it was like the way they believed certain things like the art of fighting without actually conflict in itself. It’s like ways of resolving things. It’s more to do with mentalities, the way you see things. The main message is basically it’s not basically, you don’t always need to have conflict in a sense to get somewhere. There are so many different ways around things even when everything seems like there is only one way round it in a sense. The way you perceive things. The one thing I can always remember is how they say that to win a war, because they were talking a long time ago in Chinese and that, Taoism believes that when they used to have like there was a big wall between certain parts of Chinese territories and Japan and what not so, it came to more like the art of fighting without
actually having to fight. It’s almost out thinking the other person. (Bally 538-567)

Bally is involved in martial art and he gives important place for martial arts in his self-identity collage: ‘I achieved Black Belt at the age of 13, I was quite young. I broke some records’ (Bally 152).

Figure 4.25: Chinese martial arts in Bally’s self-identity collage

He describes the influence of martial arts on his mind:

That’s the thing. It is, I think, a lot of things I learned then in terms of discipline. It taught me a lot in terms of getting your head down. And it changes you as a person although it’s like, it makes you even in other aspects of life you will be a lot more focused, you will keep your head, you will think more I think generally. I think it has helped quite a lot. It is more of a way of life than just a sport as such. (Bally169-174)

The focus here is on the intercultural processes that lead to the formation of a multiplicity of cultural positions or voices coming together in the self of a single individual (Pieterse, 2001). Such positions or voices, as we have seen in Ali’s or Bally’s examples, may become engaged in mutual negotiations, agreements, disagreements, tensions, and conflicts. Different cultural voices are involved in various kinds of dialogical relationships and produce positive or negative meanings in fields of uncertainty. In other words, the global–local conversation is not just a reality outside the individual but rather is a part of the internal dialogue in the self.

This perception of individual identity challenges the essentialist view of the participants’ self-identity corresponding to membership of a specific group or social category that structures his/her perception, being, and behaviour. Tajfel (1981) offers a definition of this perception when he defines social identity as ‘that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to this”' (p.

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Instead, this research describes self-identities as ‘fragmented or fractured’ (Kidd 2002). What this means is that ‘the dominant, absolute and rigid traditional sources of identity have been replaced by new sources’ (Kidd, 2002, p. 143). In other words, as the result of globalisation and multivocal society the modernist sources of identity such as class, gender and ethnicity have become ‘much looser, much freer- able to be manipulated and played with as never before’ (Kidd, 2002, p.145). Kidd (2002) explains that in the postmodern age our identity is not handed down to us as something which is fixed; instead it is up to us how we construct our identity. The consumption of popular culture and especially mass media products assists us in constructing our identity. Consumers are able to choose what sort of people they want to be and remould themselves and their lives. The current individual is described as a ‘social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation’ (Gergen, 1991, p. 150).

One of the most important sources of inspiration for the construction of these new forms of identities is celebrities. Breese (2010, p.340) states that: ‘Celebrities are more than successful commodities whose images are created and maintained by the entertainment and media industries’. According to this view celebrities are ‘meaningful symbols, modern-day totems, through which we talk about ourselves and our society in the public sphere’ (Breese 2010, p.341). Therefore, an understanding of the influence global celebrity can help us to understand the influence of globalisation of markets on self-identity.

Breese (2010) explains that celebrities are also symbols by which we narrate, negotiate, and interpret our collective experience and establish moral boundaries. Therefore, the focus is on the cultural meanings associated with celebrities. This is in line with marketing scholars (Richins, 1994; McCracken, 1989; Belk, 1988) who claim that people engage in consumption behaviour, in part to construct their self-concepts and to create their personal identities.
The main interest of this section is to learn what type of celebrities the participants have chosen to identify with and learn why they have chosen a specific celebrity as their favourite. This can help us to learn how the participants position themselves between the discourse of South Asian identity and a global discourse when they chose global brands to identify with. The assumption of acculturation scholars (for example, McCracken, 1986) is that products (celebrities in this case) are an embodiment of a group’s cultural values. In the same line Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004) argued that the consumer behaviour of South Asians is the result of the influence of their acculturation process. Elliott et al. (1998) explain that the self is embedded in social practices; therefore, one’s self-identity must be validated through social interaction. Symbolic meanings of celebrities, then, are used to construct, maintain and express these self-identities. Symbolic values and meanings are important to consumers not only because they help to retain a sense of the past, but also because they help consumers to categorise themselves in society; they can even communicate cultural meaning such as ethnic identity, traditions and religious identity (Belk, 1988).

In order to create a clearer picture of the participants’ celebrity choice, I have collected examples of these choices in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>origins</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Positive public figure</th>
<th>Reason for choice</th>
<th>Negative public figure</th>
<th>Reason for choice</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Roy Keane</td>
<td>Plays for Manchester United, Excellent footballer, Tough, Competitive</td>
<td>No Negative public figure has been chosen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ali Supports Manchester United</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Vaughan</td>
<td>Mentally tough, Excellent cricketer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ali plays football himself</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mahatma Ghandi</td>
<td>Brought independence for his country Fought for everyone in India not only the Hindu</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>Changed the world Sacrificed himself for the benefit of his people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Luther King</td>
<td>Changed the world</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malcolm X</td>
<td>Established The Nation of Islam organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anissa</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Angelina Jolie</td>
<td>Angelina Jolie’s visit to Nowshera in Pakistan to highlight the plight of more than 20 million people affected by the country’s worst ever floods.</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>Clubing and drinking</td>
<td>Not appropriate for a mother</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The prophet Mohammed</td>
<td>The respect he gave to his wives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asim</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Jonathan Ross</td>
<td>Energetic, successful</td>
<td>Katie Price-Jordan</td>
<td>Because of her nude modelling work, she is selfish and annoying</td>
<td>Links his choices to his personal characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dermot O'Leary</td>
<td>Energetic, successful funny, self confident</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan Sugar</td>
<td>Successful, good sense of fashion, strong personality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raswan</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Angelina Jolie</td>
<td>Helps developing countries, hard working person.</td>
<td>Paris Hilton</td>
<td>Never had to work hard for herself</td>
<td>Raswan is a community activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammera</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Shahrukh Khan (Bollywood star)</td>
<td>He is strong and tough</td>
<td>George Bush</td>
<td>His political fight against Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sami Yusuf (British-Asian singer)</td>
<td>He is handsome</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Summayah**  
female  
Pakistani  
Muslim | Angelina Jolie | Humanitarian work, not a 'Diva', peace promoter | Britney Spears | Bad behaviour | Summayah has suffered from bad acne problem in her teenage and was bullied in school because of that |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate Moss</td>
<td>Overcame Cocaine addiction and saved her professional career.</td>
<td>George Bush</td>
<td>Needless war</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cameron Diaz</td>
<td>Suffered from very bad acne problem in her teenage and has managed to overcome it and develop amazing acting career in Hollywood.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Mirza**  
male  
Indian  
Muslim | Did not choose | Did not choose |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| **Anu**  
female  
Indian  
Sikh | Did not choose | Did not choose |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| **Bally**  
male  
Indian  
Sikh | Bruce Lee | Top of his sport | John Terry | Cheater, not a nice person, doesn’t respect his role as the captain of the national team of England | Bally did not have a hard childhood. He appreciates Tyson for his determination |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mike Tayson</td>
<td>Made the right choices in life when he could easily make the wrong choice because of his rough upbringing and never be a boxer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Jaz**  
female  
Indian  
Sikh | Did not choose | John McCririck | Sexist, did not help his mates when he stayed in The Big Brother house, upper class snob |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| **Sannita**  
female  
Indian  
Sikh | Richard Branson * | Overcame Dyslexia | Religious leaders | Extreme and judgmental | *Although Sannita doesn’t suffer from Dyslexia she finds Branson’s ability to overcome personal difficulties inspiring |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods</td>
<td>Top of their sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Nisha**  
female  
Indian  
Hindu | Catherine Zeta-Jones | Like her fashion style | Katie Price-Jordan | nude | *Nisha’s grandfather is a hindu priest who lead a very spiritual life for the family. This might explain her connection with Syler and super powers |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Lopez</td>
<td>Nisha feels she does not need to be ‘skinny’ to follow her fashion style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Syler-fictional character from the NBC drama ‘Heroes’.</td>
<td>His super-natural powers scare her</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The findings above suggest that the individual is constantly in negotiation with multiple cultural resources that contribute to the construction of the identity of the participants. Part of it is the contribution of celebrities who play a role in constructing the identity of the participant. This construction is a blend of different elements from the different cultural resources. In the identification processes with celebrities, different categories are used flexibly, as a background through which specific personal identities are actively negotiated by the speaker (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). Members can align with an image of the celebrity or distance themselves from it, or change it, according to the context and their personal agenda in the specific situation, in order to produce a highly specific personal identity meaningful to the occasion and to the task at hand. As outlined by Widdicombe (1998, p.70), ‘in the business of doing identity, the status of such normative knowledge should be treated as a participant’s resource which may be invoked, transformed or rejected’. In the course of ordinary activities individuals project different identity attributions of celebrities on themselves and on others, using cultural resources to do so.

4.4.7 Lifestyle and consumption

This section concerns not only the integrative aspect of the participants British identity, but also practical aspects of their identity (Billig, 1995) namely, ‘life style’ and ‘consumption’. Following the discussion in the literature (for example Sekhon et al., 2011) the main areas reviewed within these aspects are: fashion, popular culture including television and music, food, and alcohol-related activities such as going to the pub. It could be argued that these aspects are ‘Western’ or ‘global’ rather than ‘British’, but nevertheless they are used by many scholars and by the participants themselves to differentiate between one’s culture of origin and the host culture. The participants may be using these criteria of lifestyle and consumption as comparative dimensions that enable them to feel included within the category – British.
Traditionally, acculturation literature in marketing (for example, Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1999; Akegaard et al., 2005) treats the immigrant as the ‘other’. Penaloza (1994, p.32) explains that marketing sees immigrants as ‘foreigners who came from another country and another culture who speak another language’. These immigrants are outside ‘the imagined community of the nation people’ (Chavez, 1991). The immigrants come with various demographic and psychographic characteristics to the host society, where they are influenced by dual sets of agents aligned with their culture of origin and of immigration. Through a process of consumer learning they exhibit consumption patterns associated with the existing culture, their previous culture, or a form of hybrid combination of the two cultures.

Askegaard et al. (2005) suggest four possible identity positions that are the discursive outcomes of negotiation between their link to the ethnic community, their relationship with the host society, and the influence of global consumer culture. The first position, they suggest, is the ‘Greenlandic hyper-culture’ where the Greenlandic immigrants linked their national customs and other cultural possessions directly to their self-identity, ‘idealizing cultural origins in the immigrant environment’ (Askegaard et al, 2005, p.163). The next two positions are the hybrid positions of ‘oscillating pendulum’ and the ‘best-of-both-worlders’. The focus of this section is on the fourth discursive position, ‘the Danish cookie’. According to the model of Askegaard et al. (2005) in this position the ethnic individual feels excited about market freedoms and the possibilities of individual advancement available in the more developed consumer culture of the host.

Askegaard et al. (2005, p.169) claim that individuals that are positioned within the ‘Danish cookie’ identity will be highly assimilated into the host society. They explain that the ethnic individual’s expectations of, and desire to avoid, cultural misunderstanding and border policing lead to acculturative modifications from having Greenlandic-oriented behaviours to having a consumerist-oriented discourse and Danish identity. Following this line of thought, an exhibition of preference for British or Western brands and products rather than South Asian products will reflect a high level of acculturation and the individual would be expected to be closer to his or her British self-identity.
This interpretive claim suggests that ethnic consumers use products and consumption practices to negotiate differences between ethnic and British cultures while forging contingent identities derived from these differences (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). This claim is based on the understanding that the functions of the symbolic meanings of products operate in two directions, outward in constructing the social world and inward in constructing our self-identity (Elliott, 1997). As such, consumption plays a central role in supplying meanings and values for the creation and maintenance of the consumer’s personal and social world.

Holt (1997, p.333) explains that the foundational assumption of this interpretive approach that he calls the ‘object signification approach’ is that social meanings are located in the consumption object. Thus anyone who consumes the same category or brand of object is partaking in the same meaning attached to it. This is in line with McCracken’s (1986) heuristic model that views consumption objects as semiotic containers in which ‘various cultural codes are embedded by cultural producers using marketing techniques’ (Holt 1997, p.333). Consumers engage in a variety of symbolic actions to acquire, use and enhance these object meanings for their personal symbolic projects, but they do not have a qualitative impact on what the consumption object expresses.

Elliott (1997) explains that all voluntary consumption carries, either consciously or unconsciously, symbolic meanings; if the consumer has choices to consume, s/he will consume things that hold particular symbolic meanings. Therefore a second generation South Asian British individual will make a consumer choice between products and brands that are charged with either ethnic or British meanings. Markus and Nurius (1986, p.955) suggest that ‘an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from categories made salient by the individual’s particular socio-cultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual’s immediate social experiences’.
The symbolic meanings of consumer possessions may portray essences of her/his individuality, or reflect her/his desirable connections with others whether British or South Asian (Kleine et al., 1995). Consumption of meaning-charged products or brands helps the consumer to categorise her/himself in society as ‘British’ or ‘Ethnic’ (Belk 1988). In this section I would like to assess this interpretive description of reality and link my discussion to recent works (for example Askegaard et al., 2005; Jamal and Chapman, 2000) that place the idea of stable acculturation categories in doubt.

4.4.7.1 Fashion

Appearance is often perceived as a hallmark of assimilation and acculturation (for example, Puar, 1994; Oswald, 1999). Oswald explains that fashion consumption provided important cultural codes for participants when interacting with both their own community and mainstream society. Just as Nisha, for example, may dress in ‘western’ clothes to shop at Tesco to avoid exclusion, she may also choose to wear a shalwar kameez while purchasing Asian groceries in the ethnic shop for inclusion. Ritzer (1992) explains that fashion can be part of objective culture allowing individuals to come into conformity with the norms of a group.

To be able to understand the participants’ approach to fashion we need to understand first their ideas of beauty. The globalisation of consumer culture, the penetration of global media to all parts of the world, and an increasingly globalised beauty industry all lead to the hegemony of western beauty standards (Kühne, 2010). The Independent (20\textsuperscript{th} November, 2010) tells the story of Kareena Kapoor, a Bollywood star:

Five years ago, Kareena Kapoor, a top young actress in Bollywood, was a typical Punjabi girl, buxom and shapely, luscious like sweet kulfi ice-cream. Today, I imagine, kulfi would make her heave and biryani is never on her plate. For, you see, Kareena saw the light, and today she is svelte and sinewy enough to jog on the streets of LA and wear the tightest of designer jeans. Her millions of fans have gone crazy, they speculate on the web about her amazing diet and want to copy her example. Size zero has arrived in India.
Kuehne (2010) offers a functional rather than a normative understanding of beauty. He explains that beauty has long served as symbolic or cultural capital that can be individually achieved. No longer just a product of nature, so to speak, beauty became increasingly interwoven with the democratic aspirations of emerging consumer societies, in which supposedly everyone could be beautiful. This democratic vision of beauty, however, was always bounded by gender norms and racial prejudices. Furthermore, heavily mediated beauty ideals have exerted pressures to conform that at times negated their democratic promise.

Summayah who wears traditional Muslim clothes, describes her reaction to the film ‘The Devil wears Prada’. The film tells the story about a young journalist who get the job of assistant to the editor-in-chief of ‘Runway fashion magazine’. Despite having little knowledge of fashion, the young journalist changes gradually and begins to dress more stylishly. Slowly but surely, she begins to sacrifice her old self for the arrival of the new trendy one. Summayah says: ‘I love that film, me and my friends, we are thinking, yeah we are going to be like her, she changed so dramatically from the ugly duckling to this beautiful swan. So we always refer to ourselves as that (Summayah 830-835).

Growing up in a western society the second generation of South Asian immigrants are socialised into the western discourse of beauty. Sayantini DasGupta and her first generation immigrant mother Shamita Das DasGupta (1998), using their own personal experiences as a pivot, explain that for many second generation South Asian girls, coming of age in America has been a very painful process. Sayantini DasGupta recalled that growing up in an almost all white, Midwestern American suburb, she was one of the few ‘brown’ girls. Growing up among an ‘ocean of blonde hair and blue eyes’, her feelings about her appearance, she notes, were ‘particularly low’ (p. 121). Bhatia (2002) explains: ‘Not being able to live up to the “unattainable” images of “Charlie’s Angels” and the golden-curled girls of “The Brady Bunch” and facing repeated and constant racial slurs at school combined with a lack of role models, affected Das’s self-esteem. For many non-westerns, second generation individuals, being “othered” or “racialized” accentuates the pain of dislocation and
displacement. These external positions and voices that are marked and assigned to the “brown” girl become internalized or appropriated’ (Bhatia, 2002, p.63).

For second generation individuals the pressure to attain these standards of beauty inflict a need either to be like whites or to project an image intended to make them desirable to the ‘normal’ white opposite gender (Purkayastha, 2005). Many describe how they glance continuously at the people around them (white people) to keep up to date with the ‘right’ look which include clothes, hairstyle and body shape.

A  I don’t necessarily get inspiration from celebrities anything like that.
Q  No?
A  I get it from, if I’m honest I think I do get it from watching other people walking in the street. Yeah, if I see something I say oh that looks really good on her, but I won’t necessarily go out and buy it. No, I think it looks nice, you know how some people can see something and say that looks really nice I have to go get one, but they don’t necessarily know their own, their body and how it will suit them, I’m not one of those people, I look at it and I know instantly, if I know, if that’s going to look right on me on my body shape with that, I need to go out and get it, you know, if it looks good on somebody, oh I need one of those, but I think it more of how it’s been used in, society, that particular fashion, and if it’s suitable. (Jaz 601-614)

Another participant, Nisha, chooses a more direct approach to find her fashion and beauty inspiration: ‘To be honest they’re [work mates] all probably fashionable apart from me, I’d ask them you know, some of my friends know exactly what the actual fashion is’ (Nisha 630-631).

In their school age, beauty norms were most often based on whatever is typical of white beauty: light skin, height, certain body types, shapes of legs and so on. Sannitta and Asim’s collages reflect this vision:

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One of the South Asian participants in Purkayastha’s research (2005) has described how many of her friends confessed to bathing over and over again with soap in order to wash themselves ‘clean and light’. Another participant who had been labelled a ‘black monkey’ in her school, explained how she tried to fit in with the prevalent gender norms by making every effort to ‘look white’; she did it by getting a perm. Here Jaz describes the same experience.

A  ‘... I think Asian hair is a lot thicker.
I  you think so?
A  A lot thicker, than ... yeah it get frizzy, it’s gets really big, and, I think English girls are really good because, as in, their hair’s naturally really, well I don’t know the...It’s very, very silky, just naturally, some, some, generally have, silky hair whereas Asian, I find, you’ve got, it’s very rare you can just naturally leave it open, because it gets really frizzy or it’s really, my hair’s really, thick, it’s out here if I didn’t straighten it, I think that’s more of an image thing to look good, I don’t feel like, good if my hair’s out there and, it looks like a mess, even though it’s combed it’s just thick and the volume’s just huge, but when it’s straightened I feel neater, feel like I’ve made an effort. (Jazz 677-691)
Jaz’s self-identity collage emphasises this perception when she puts her hair straightener as one of the most important objects in her life:

Figure 4.27 Hair straightener and perception of beauty

The fervent attempts to get the body shape of their white peers pushes some of them to work out in the gym continuously in order to attain these norms of beautiful bodies. Saneeta says: ‘I do think slimmer females look more attractive (312) and later she says (pointing at her shopping experience collage- see below): ‘This represents gym equipment... Another reason I joined was to tone up, be more flexible and basically self-appeal and change the way I look physically’ (Saneeta 302-303).

Figure 4.28 Appearance in Sannitta’s shopping experience collage
Asim expresses the same idea and says: ‘I’m really into fitness’ (83); this is supported in his self-identity collage:

Figure 4.29 Fitness in Asim’s collage

Nisha was more reluctant to accept the authority of the western discourse for beauty and body shape. She describes her internal conflict when she says: ‘And the annoying thing is you see all these skinny girls eating all this KFCs and McDonalds and you think how can you be skinny like that (1835-1836). She continues: ‘I mean it’s just things like you know wearing clothes that you wore before, not fitting in to them anymore and things like that just depresses you. Like me and my mate we always talk you know how depressed we are, we need to lose weight but its hard to push ourselves’ (Nisha 1874-1877).

Reluctantly, Nisha joins the gym as the solution for her weight problem: ‘I’ve got gym membership anyway so I can just go to the gym. Bally is good like that he can push me at the gym when I get lazy. So in a way I’ve got my personal trainer there and then’ (Nisha 1816-1818).

However, there is a contradictory voice in Nisha’s personal discourse. She expresses her belief that ‘it is all right’ to have hips. Nisha says: ‘Yeah I don’t like it. I mean that’s Americas advertisements and things like that. In the UK we don’t have that much, we are not, they call it size zero in America don’t they but we call it size 4 here
(1858-1862). Nisha goes on and explains that the ‘skinny look’ is a western idea and foreign to the South Asian culture: ‘In our culture they’d say the circular ones were more healthy looking and that would be a nice one to have’ (Nisha, 1877).

However, the self-identity collages of the other participants show that Nisha’s protest is an individual voice. Even when participants (like Anu, below) bring South Asian characters to their collage to reflect beauty they choose the ‘appropriate skinny look’.

Figure 4.30 Anu’s fashion choices

The same perception is apparent in Mirza’s shopping experience collage when he describes the fellow customers that inspired him while shopping for clothes:

Figure 4.31 Influence of fellow customers
Sirgy (1982) claims that brands and products will be able to carry social and cultural meanings and transfer these to the consumer’s self-perception only when the products’ attributes match their perception of the self. The match between perceived self-image outcome and self-expectancy is called self-congruity. Self-perception is understood as a process in which information about an event is ascribed to the self. Specifically, the perceived self-image outcome is matched with a particular self-expectancy. This self-congruity process is largely guided by the need for self-consistency, i.e., the motivation to accept information about the self that is consistent with one's established view.

Given Sirgy’s concept I have tried to find the difference between the participants who hold clear South Asian, Muslim self-perceptions and detach their self-identity from those identities who are attached to the western British discourse. The findings of this research did not reveal any difference between participants in the way they perceive beauty and fashion; the majority accept the white British ideal of beauty. The participants’ choice of inspirations for appearance reveals the same pattern. Only Samera, an observant Muslim with Pakistani origins states that she can’t find western popular culture inspiring. ‘I don’t have a lot of external influences like Hollywood or celebrities that are non-Asian. Because in Hollywood they tend to wear clothes that are like really revealing obviously I am not going to wear that. I think yeah it looks nice on them but because I am not going to wear I don’t really feel it has influenced me’ (Samera 963-974).

All other participants feel they are influenced and inspired by a global popular culture environment with no difference where they position themselves between British discourse and religious/ethnic discourse. Sanitta who positions herself more on the British end of the spectrum describes the reason she chose a specific brand of make up:
A: ‘I saw this product in Marie Claire magazine.
Q: Marie Claire is your favourite magazine?
A: Yes it’s quite good for my age group’ (Sanitta 310-325)
The same process occurs with gym membership; ‘Another reason I joined was to tone up, be more flexible and basically self-appeal and change the way I look physically... Also I seen some TV programmes which influenced me... Also, there are various brands like Nike with fitter celebrities like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods who are athletic and sporty, representing the image I want’ (Sanitta 401-409).

Anissa a (Muslim British Pakistani) positions herself in Muslim discourse and says: ‘sometimes. Just like you know when you are on Sky TV you go to the, I go normally to the showbiz section first before I actually sometimes check the news just to see what everyone is up to. But I wouldn’t say I am too over the top but I still, I do like to know what is happening with the celebrities’ (Anissa 914-918).

Nisha describes a process of negotiation between the two voices: ‘I’m not sure to be honest, maybe some you know kind of people on TV, maybe for that fashionable, some you know, pop singers that I might like and things like that’ (Nisha 637-641).

However, Nisha would like to feel she has the agency to decide what messages of beauty she accepts. Market influence is accepted only if she feels it is relevant to her life and the way she wants to be:

A I mean I like, sometimes I like Catherine Zeta-Jones’ styles, to see what clothes she wears and things like that I mean I like the kind of style that you don’t have to be stick thin to wear, something nice you know, you can be a nice shape and there’s people like Catherine Zeta-Jones, J-Lo, and people like that that are in the media, that I think for me, I may follow but then if I don’t like something they wear or, I don’t, you know, I won’t wear that, it’s, I’d have to like it as well

Q Both of them have black hair but they don’t have the same skin colour as you, does it matter or not?
A No that doesn’t matter to me it’s just inspiration ... And Catherine Zeta-Jones, obviously she’s English, and she’s, so yeah that doesn’t matter to me, as you know I still look at their shape and how they look and their clothes and depending on their clothes, that I mean I wouldn’t wear something like, I don’t know, Jordan or some as silly like that, obviously everyone’s got their different taste and, they’re the kind of people I kind of go for. (Nisha 641-653)
As we can see, fashion is one of main ways through which the participants negotiate their self-identity. While their attire is used by parents and others to monitor religious and ethnic ‘purity’ it also helps them to position themselves within the general British community. By resisting the rigid dress codes of their parents and by creating new styles the participants were able to open up possibilities for challenging the binary oppositions between ‘British’ and ‘Asian’ clothes. ‘Because say about 30 years ago the tops used to be longer, looser, the trousers used to be looser but now it is like the girls are wearing more fitted, shorter, the shorter arms and the trousers are smaller. Things like that they change all the time’ (Samira 179-185).

This negotiation happens in both directions; Sonia describes how she brings the ‘west’ to her traditional clothes: 

Yeah I have to sometimes wear a scarf or, sometimes I come to uni with the traditional clothing on, but with a hint of, western, that’s because of my fashion ... where you can wear very, boring typical Pakistani wear, which is like long and baggy, but the westernised one would be, like a tight and short, but it’s still salwar kameez, a bit westernised, but a bit, but still a bit of tradition. (Sonia 862-871)

Anissa explains how she adapts her traditional appearance to English taste: ‘I normally wear plain Asian clothes in university because you do get quite a lot of colourful ones and stuff but I normally wear like the darker colours. But at home I normally wear brighter stuff. I don’t want to wear something in university which is too in your face if you know what I mean’, (Anissa 761-772).

Some of the participants argued that it was possible to wear a range of western clothes that conformed to ethnic and religious strictures about appropriate dress rather than simply adopting the traditional dress of their parents.

Yeah as you can see that resembles the Asian outfit quite well because the Asian top dress comes up to about the knee length. So although that is not a direct thing of what I’d why I wouldn’t say that’s a long top yes I’m going to buy it but I do think about. I think that with jeans it basically represents what an Asian dress looks like with the thin trousers and the top. I think culturally yes you would think yeah I look like I’m in Asian dress. Yeah, yeah but I think that these kind of tops I think they do kind of note an Asian influence I think. I think that’s why the sort of tunic tops have colour. (Anu 835-845)
By making these adaptations, (and different individuals had different degrees of freedom in how they chose to dress), participants were able to construct an alternative identity. This choice challenged parental assumptions about appropriate attire but could also confound the expectations of others. Such dress styles challenged the supposed binary oppositions between ‘English’ and ‘Asian’ clothes, creating new, fused identities that were both ‘western’ and ‘South Asian’.

4.4.7.2 Food and identity

Interpretivist work (Wallendorf, 1987; Oswald, 1999) explains that food is important for individual identity as well as group identity. Developing the idea of meaning transfer (McCracken, 1986), these scholars claim that food can be identified with stories and myths of the culture and, therefore, serves as a powerful tool to communicate and reinforce cultural meanings and norms as a tangible cultural form of social expression (Penaloza, 1994).

Acculturation scholars (for example Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991, p. 18) explain that food consumption forms the vehicle for the individual to adapt to the new culture while honouring the traditions of home and the idiosyncrasies of individual members. Askegaard et al. (2005) investigated food consumption among Greenlanders living in Denmark. Their findings show that food is often an important element in the construction of ethnic and national identity; Greenlanders consume Greenlandic food as a way to reclaim their ethnic identity and integrated Danish and global foods in their meals as part of the acculturation process they went through.

The participants in my research positioned themselves between two alternatives: loyalty to traditional food and preferences for British food. The traditionalists emphasised the element of familiarity with the taste, freshness, attention and care for family members, of Asian food. Those that preferred British food emphasised the wide variety, awareness of the need to eat healthier food, convenience, and sense of adventure. Nisha offers us a vivid description of this when she describes the first time she went to her white British friend’s house for tea:
Well, when I first went ... it felt a bit strange because they all have tea, tea sitting, everyone sitting around the table, all with their, you know forks and knives, with us we might eat like you know chapatti with our hands and things like that, that, that is strange and, it seemed quite posh, even though they weren’t posh people but to me it did.

Dessert, sorry starter maybe, main course, dessert, we’d just, you know have a chapatti, and maybe grab a chocolate after or something, it’s nothing like that, or we’d sit on the floor and eat or in front of the TV, so it’s a bit different like that

Q Did you enjoy it?
A I did enjoy it, it was different it thought you know, it’s good to have that experience in your head you think ok, I’ve done it now like, I’ve been to my friend's house to have tea, it’s quite exciting when you’re little. (Nisha 435-449)

Sonia illustrates the traditionalist view: ‘I love cooking. My mother is always cooking and she’s kind of like brought it on to me to experiment and do things which you like to eat.

Q Do you like cooking Asian food or you cook all sorts of food?
A I do cook other food as well. Chinese is nice, oriental nice but with a curry because I think I’ve mastered it I can make anything and everything perfect I hope and I enjoy that because I’m used to the taste. Because every other food is very bland compared to the curry. So that’s good. And I’ve used the lentils here [see self-identity collage 4.32] which I like cooking. But also I have a lot of takeaways. There are quite a few takeaways in Burton.

Q Are these Asian takeaways?
A Asian yes. And where we can eat the halal meat which is important. (Sonia 93-105).
However, we can see that even Sonia adds western brands of chocolates for the desert in the section she dedicates to food.

Summayah describes her attempts to convince her father to open up to western food:

‘Yeah, before my dad didn’t even know what pasta was. When I used to make it, he was like, “it’s not cooked properly”! You know with Asian food it takes long to cook. You know you’ll do it “al dente” stage and they don’t understand that. But he has got into it. I really like mixing cultural food. You know, Italian and stuff. I am not so fond of French food but actually French food is alright’ (Summayah 635-642).

Nisha (Hindu participant) describes the negotiation between these two discourses when she describes the fast food she buys:

I’ll buy a chicken burger. I mean I can’t say I’ve never eaten beef because I have in the past. But obviously I’m not trying to now. I mean I have eaten beef which is a bad thing for me. If my granddad found out he’d kill me but I have done that but now I just stick to chicken like burgers from McDonalds or KFC and things like that so. So yes I make sure there is no beef in the sandwiches. I don’t mind chicken in it, maybe fish and things like that. So I look for kind of healthy options like that.
Then she explains that she prefers to cook English food at home because it is less demanding in terms of work: ‘Yeah then I probably find myself doing western food all the time. Because it’s a lot quicker nowadays. Like I say if we are both working it is just convenient to be honest (Nisha 2011-2014).

Samera who still lives at home prefers western food but her mother refuses to cook it as: ‘Yeah or like if I was to make it myself just like pasta or something at home but my mother would not consider pasta as food (Samera 130-131).

The influence of food on group identity and acculturation has been used by Oswald (1999) to describe the process of ‘culture swapping’. She explains that the most obvious characteristic of Haitian immigrants’ food consumption was its multiculturalism: depending on the occasion and the audience they serve American food, ethnic dishes or fast food (p.309). However, rather than impose strict universal codes of consumption on her participants, Oswald claims that food consumption invites them to perform ‘active negotiation of variations on the codes. One of the participants (Asim) in this study provides an example of active negotiation blending South Asian food and British Western. Asim says: ‘My sister can make English food like pastas, and chips and stir fry. Or we go for takeout it could be Asian or it could be fish and chips or it could be you know an English dish (1115-1118). Later he says: ‘That’s the best thing about us we can be fluent in making, we can make fish and chips, we are fluent in making curry at home, we don’t have to specially go outside to buy curry. Whereas I suppose a lot of people struggle because they are not fluent in it’ (Asim 1133-1137).

The choice of grocery store to buy food in reflects the conversation between British and traditional food. Lo (2010) has studied Chinese immigrants in Canada and found that most go to both Chinese and traditional grocery stores every week. ‘If they are looking for an ethnic-related cooking item, they prefer a Chinese store; if they are looking for dairy or bread or pasta, then they go to mainstream store’, says Lo (p.10). Illustrating Lo’s point, Asim shops at an Indian shop for spices, dry goods and meats and supermarkets for dairy and bread. ‘I buy in supermarkets, Asda, Tesco. They are
cheaper because they are bigger. I mean I’ll only go to Asian stores if I need Asian things that supermarkets don’t do like spices (Asim 1377-1379).

Some of the participants don’t enjoy this split and would prefer to shop only in the British supermarket.

Our Asda is a very ethnic it does have a section, for ethnic people like now because in our area there’s loads of, in Asda area where the people shop, most of their customers are Polish, so about three months ago, they’ve got a Polish stand there now for Polish, for Polish people, for Polish food, yeah, and they have Indian they’ve got oriental so they have got it but in, probably Morrisons they’re not bothered about ethnic, they sell anything, and wherever normal ... . It would give it advantage (to the supermarkets) as in they will get the people in because, I will tell my mum or my sister that Asda does sell this Asda does do this, so then word of mouth will get the Asian community to come to Asda, which is good which is what they need for business, and we’re getting what we want, and they’re getting what they want so both side are. (Sonia 1356-1378)

In addition to the conversation between the voices of traditional and British food there was a third voice influencing food consumption. This was the global discourse of healthy eating and wellbeing as perceived by western governments and lifestyle media. Participants associate their food choices with physical health. All participants were aware of, and discussed frequently, the relationship between food and the body. Some participants’ beliefs reflected western nutritional approach to food and health focusing on the long-term implications of specific ways of eating. Within this way of understanding food and health, there was a tendency to equate healthy eating with ‘English’ foods, and to criticise Indian foods as unhealthy.

Asim and Sanitta’ self-identity collages reflect these health concerns:
A ... in terms of health because if I’m in better shape my health is better. So it works together in a sense and I feel good as well. Because you would feel good if you were in shape. For example diets, I am conscious of what I eat. I try not to eat less fatty foods because I know the more fatty foods you eat then the more hard you have to work in gym. And the more hard you have to work in gym then the more time in there and so in a sense

Q So what kind of things do you eat now?
A I do eat beef but I’m maybe down to once every week or maybe every two weeks. Now I’m using other things for just sandwiches.
Q What do you eat for breakfast? do you eat breakfast?
A Cereals, just like branflakes. Something with good protein, good fibre in it that keeps you going. (Asim 1276-1287)
4.4.7.3 Alcohol

Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p.56) explain that subjects can only be thought so because of discursive practices that ‘fix’ them in certain positions, the meaning of which can only be derived from the ‘differential among positions’ where one can momentarily close up difference and otherness in favour of a unitary, wholesome and identical self. In this sense, it is precisely because discursive practices permit such points of closure that identities can be ‘apparently safe’ to leave out difference excluding otherness and turn it into the ‘exterior’.

Difference is then constitutive of identities as well as serving a basis for the possibility of social exchange, in that identities fuel social communication and social bonds. Through the constant imaginary delineation of new frontiers between who one is and who is other, what is here and me, and what is you and them, a continuous social construction and deconstruction process is animated. Differences can be conceived as ‘points of tension that occur in the process of subjectivation, like permanent displacements towards othering in the constitution of subject and of social processes’ (Laclau et al., 1985, p. 57). The discourse of alcohol consumption illustrates this description of reality.

Many of the participants spoke at some length about their abstinence from alcohol, thereby indicating that this is an especially meaningful (if, in many cases, symbolic) statement of identification with the community, tradition and religion. Some of the participants thought that drinking is a central aspect of the social lives of most British people and consequently feel isolated. For example, Mirza feels that alcohol consumption reflects the difference in values and moral codes of behaviour between white British society and the South Asian community.

‘Most white people today, they drink, they go out, they sleep around, they go clubbing, I don’t do that, you see, so that’s why I don’t have a much, of things to talk with them … . No that’s the thing they get drunk, they do stupid things let’s do this, let’s do that, to be honest, I don’t, do not like the personality when they become when they drink, and they become more wild and more, excited and kind of things, I just think, it just, it’s no, nothing against them, it’s just I prefer to hang around with people, who I know when you see is what you get you know? (Mirza 1016-1027)
Later he disconnects himself clearly from this perceived life style: ‘We’re not talking to them while they’re getting drunk, or while he’s being sick, they’ve got to understand that we’re not going to take, we’re not going to pity him you know’ (Mirza 1039-1044).

Anissa expresses the same rejection

I don’t see that environment as appealing to me ... because you see, because sometimes when I finish work I will be waiting for my dad and stuff and there is a club around that area and you just see a lot of drunk people and you know and I don’t think I like to be in that sort of environment. I like to know what I am doing. Like the drink thing I’ve never actually wanted to drink ever. I have smoked but I have never wanted to drink. I have never seen the appealing because a lot of people used to say, a lot of people say the reason they drink is to have a good time. But then when I am with my friends I don’t need to drink I can have a good time without drinking. (Anissa 686-697)

Anissa feels that alcohol stands in her way to integration in the British society she explains:

Yeah because for a Muslim even if you don’t drink you can’t go to an environment where they sell alcohol as well and you can’t because at work you know when they have these sort of dos and stuff (Anissa 709-718)

Sonia develops this idea and explain that alcohol might prevent her being friends with a white British person:

No I wouldn’t think of how I can’t be a friend, I would think how I can be her friend, and always look at the positive, view really, but if she was to, ask me to go out for a drink, in a bar or something, I would say no. Because firstly I don’t drink and I don’t want to interact, intermingle, in an environment where there’s people drinking and things like that, because I don’t believe in that. (494-498)

However, this is not without conflict and, as Laclau and Mouffle (1985) would say: ‘struggling for points of closure’. They explain that discourses are always open to new possibilities of signification. Therefore, notions of self and other have to be constantly affirmed and negotiated as they are bound to change as new scenarios of material and symbolic resources are presented.
An alternative discourse for alcohol consumption has emerged during the analysis of the findings. Alcohol and socialising became cultural metaphors for freedom from ethnic-cultural norms, an opportunity to express themselves without the perceived fear that such consumption would be relayed, by the South Asian community, back to their parents. Friendship groups then became more important than family considerations. Some of the participants went clubbing and drinking with their co-ethnic friends. For example Nisha who told me how she and her friends went unnoticed out of their family homes to night clubs:

Yeah, I have been clubbing, but my dad doesn’t know I’ve been clubbing I’m sure he can, at the back of his mind he might guess but, I’ve said it’s been on uni trips and things like that. I went with girls from here, which probably snuck out the same way, most of my friends obviously are Asian, from uni, they are Asian, Hindu, Muslim mixed kind of thing but they have, even though we’re different religions we’ve got the very same values and you know parents don’t let you go out, they’re strict and things like that, you know they’ve snuck out and I’ve lied about being at work and things like that, it’s not something you wanna do but you have to do it sometimes, it’s horrible to think that you’re doing it but, you know you don’t get left with a choice. (Nisha 756-768)

Nisha explain her choice to go clubbing and drinking only with her Asian friends: ‘I tried to go out with my English friends but I’ve never really been out clubbing with my English friends because, never had a chance to. I think it’s difficult for them as well, I don’t know if they understand, because, because you’re with all Asian girls they understand that you’ve got to be home at a certain time if, so you don’t get caught, with English they might stay out a bit longer they’re not really you know, too fussed’ (392-416).

Geographical distance whilst in university often reduced the immediate importance of families and provided participants with the opportunity to express their individuality through alcohol consumption. However, this was not because of any cultural reasons or family conformity. Instead participants viewed alcohol as synonymous with the personal freedom offered by university life.
For me it’s just more culturally I mean I do drink, I go with my friends we go to the pub. When I was younger in university I probably drank more and go out to parties and this that and the other. But I don’t think there is anything really badly wrong with it either. Unless you start doing silly things like if you get drunk and you cause fights and swear and hit people then it is stupid. Like me I don’t really get drunk too easily. I’ve only been drunk a couple of times and I drank quite a lot before. Maybe if they don’t do other things then they find that’s a way to obviously socialise with their friends so I wouldn’t say that I don’t understand that because I do similar things. But it’s just to what level. I really have cut down a lot even when I go to parties now I might just have one beer if that sometimes. (Bally 818-835)

It seems that rejecting alcohol consumption was parallel to the rejection of certain aspects of white British life style. In accordance with the meaning transfer model, meanings from British culture have been attached to alcohol. Consequently, consumers that do not want to be part of this meaning-making need to reject the product. However, when accepting the product the participants did not accept this meaning themselves and did not regard themselves as closer to British culture following alcohol consumption.

4.4.7.4 Hip-hop and soap operas

The focus of social and cultural research on the consumption of popular media and music of subcultures has gradually shifted away from a study of ‘resistance through rituals’ (Hall and Jefferson 1975) during the 1970s and 1980s to a more postmodern conceptual framework concerned with the construction of new ethnicities and the dynamics of multi-culturalism (Wulff, 1995). The study of hybridity, fluid identities and de-contextualisation is at the heart of this analysis of subcultural practices.

Conversations with the participants about their music choice and its influence on their self-identity revealed a wide range of tastes. For example Sanitta’s favourite genre is rock and she describes going to a Red Hot Chilli Peppers concert as one of the special moments of her life.
Anu describes her deep connection to salsa and bangra: ‘I absolutely love salsa. I love the body movement. I just love how you can just be free in it. I think it is great. I have done lots of bangra dancing as well for different like Asian road shows. And did a lot of performances, yeah it was brilliant. Yes you can’t get me off the dance floor. As soon as the music starts I don’t eat or drink for the whole night I just stay on the dance floor until I just can’t dance anymore. But yeah like I said I can’t stand still when there is music playing I have to move to it (Anu 331-342).

A clearer example of negotiation between music and ethnic self-identity can be seen in Mirza’s description of the music choice of his younger sister:

‘My little sister she is not there yet. She is like the youngest so she gets whatever she wants. The youngest whatever she says daddy’s little girl will get away with whatever she wants. So whatever she says she’ll get that but ‘she is not in a religious manner at the very minute. She [is] just like at the rock stage, like into heavy metal rock as the music. She does what she thinks is best’ (337-342).

Many scholars in this area of research (for example Clay, 2003) suggest that the adoption of hip hop music by ethnic individuals is one of the most important illustrations of the link between music choice and identity construction in ethnic minorities. The findings of my research support this claim. Clay (2003, p.1355) explains that ‘by incorporating hip hop culture into rituals of everyday life, black youth have made it marker of black youth subculture’. Hip hop is thus an important
source of cultural capital which can reinforce ethnic and ‘racial boundaries and can also serve to ‘authenticate’ a black cultural experience or de-contextualise it and involve other subcultures, for example, the South Asian.

Yeah there’s quite a lot of hip hop in my collage I’ve put ... here they were basically hip hop sort of artists. I listen to a lot of that kind of music more for, I know it sounds silly but Tupac had a lot of meaning behind, I think probably most people didn’t realise because a lot of kids now just listen because ... but Tupac I listened generally for the actual, not the meaning the context was quite good. And the reason I put these down because they were a group of four people and it was funny when we started producing me and a couple of my friends, going back a couple of years ago, we used to listen to a lot of their music and their sort of four personality sort of mirrored our four personalities. It was like we could each match one of our personalities similarly to one member of the band. (Bally 438-448)

Figure 4.35- Hip hop in Bally’s self-identity collage

4.4.7.4.1 British Hip Hop Reconfigurations

Drissel (2011) explains that British hip hop has been influenced by the original American hip hop but much of it developed separately in parallel fashion in the early 1980s by black Jamaican immigrants. He claims that many of the themes of American ‘gangsta rap’, such as gunplay and carjacking, were relatively alien to British culture and met with little success in domestic rap forms. Consequently, the ‘blackness’ of British rap initially relied more on the Afro-Caribbean diaspora experience, while focusing its social critique primarily on neo-colonialism, imperialism, and institutional racism rather than gang-related vocabulary and images (Hesmondhalgh and Melville, 2002).

South Asians first became intimately involved with the emerging British hip hop subculture in the early 1980s, primarily as graffitists and break-dancers (Sharma
2005). Very few were involved in rapping or music production initially, though circumstances changed by the early nineties with the creation of South Asian rap bands (for example: Panjabi MC, Mick St Clair, X-ecutive Productionz, and Bally Sagoo). Sharma (2005) explains that the main themes of their songs were in accord with the British Afro-Caribbean rap against neo-colonialism and criticism of non-whites who “sell-out”, their identity including fellow South Asians who these bands label “coconuts” i.e., ‘brown on the outside but white on the inside’. Thus British South Asian hip hop was framing the collective hip hop identity as authentically South Asian, or in other words, “keeping it real”, which is one of the core values of global hip hop.

4.4.7.4.2 British Asians negotiating black identity

British social scientists have tried to explain the underlying reasons why South Asians in the UK increasingly are constructing black-inflected identities, while at the same time tending to avoid any explicit self-identification as ‘black’. One of the main works in this area was of Gilroy (1993, p.155) who observes that ‘black styles, music, dress, dance fashion, and language become a determining force shaping the styles, music, dress, dance, fashion, and language of urban Britain as a whole’. The work of Huq (2006) contends that British Asians are ‘reconfiguring what it means to be Asian by adopting urban black stylistic codes such as American hip hop derived fashion and language’ (Huq, 2006, p. 24). Muslim and Hindu South Asians apparently have appropriated such black-inflected hip-hop identities; responding to their own particular social/personal needs for collective identity affirmation, they ‘react to disparate societal stereotypes involving the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and religion’ (Drissel, 2011, p. 212).

Bally describes this change of lifestyle in the life of his British South Asian friends:

Q In what way?
A In what way I mean like one or two of my friends, well the majority of my friends are very sort of track suits, hoodies, a bit more like you’d see hip hop ... gangsters. A little bit, not too much. Some are but at the same time they still wear sweatshirts like me maybe jeans, but not as much they wouldn’t wear jeans on a regular basis. Because even me sometimes when I relax I do
wear combat trousers, I will wear a hoodie, with me it’s a lot more casual, smart casual. You’ll probably see me wearing a lot of jumpers where they probably won’t. But even with my white friends I’d say they are still about the same. A lot of the ones I know would still wear tracksuits like my other mates and wear hoodies and similar sort of stuff.

Q: So are you more westernised than your friends or is it personal style?
A: No I don’t think it’s being westernised I think it is just personal taste. I don’t think its cultural or anything like that I think it is purely on taste because the thing is with England now the way the culture is it is so mix and match of everything anyway. You’ve got a bit of America culture, hip hop culture then you’ve got, everyone has such different backgrounds now that if you look at ten people even from the same sort of background you are going to get ten different outfits. And I think that’s the way it is. (Bally 1249-1270)

Rather than blindly cloning the African-American model, British Asian rappers have synthesised particular frames of global hip hop with their own musical traditions, idioms, issues, and symbols. Though Britain’s hip hop subculture has managed to retain much of the original blackness and hyper-masculinity of the American archetype, British South Asian rappers have effectively transformed those characteristics to express their own lived realities (Sharma, 2005).

4.4.7.4.3  Cool Islam

In the case of Muslim youth, the transnational identity of being ‘Muslim’ has mostly superseded the trans-ethnic British concept of non-whites having a ‘black’ identity, at least within British Muslim discourse (Dwyer, 1999). Nevertheless, black-inflections have grown persistently within British Muslim identities and even grown more acute in recent years, apparently due to the appeal of ‘cool’ (Archer, 2001) black depictions of masculinity in hip hop. Like the slang term ‘hip’, the subcultural concept of ‘cool’ reportedly has African diasporic/African-American origins.

Ali, a British Muslim participant, expresses this idea when he talks about his sense of fashion: ‘I think it reflects a city life I think. It does yeah. That’s about it because…It’s sophistication meeting the hip’ (Ali 1334-1337).

Ali’s description is apt given the emerging idea of ‘Cool Islam’ (Sarder, 2006). Meaningfully, a new hybridised identity has emerged in Western Europe that is often described as ‘cool Islam’, which is designed to promote a more modern, decidedly
less fundamentalist collective identity for young Muslims. Sarder (2006) explains that framing Islam as ‘cool’ is an apparent attempt to counteract popular stereotypes of Muslims, young men in particular, as overly traditional, anti-Western, puritanical, menacing, and socially repressed. In many respects, ‘Cool Islam’ is directly linked to hip hop and a black-inflected identity that is reflected in the musical tastes, values, and attitudes of young British Muslim men (Sarder, 2006).

Recontextualised to better reflect the demographic and sociopolitical conditions of Great Britain, hip hop has been appropriated by British South Asians living in a state of social exclusion and cultural flux. In summary we can see that young British South Asian adults use hip hop to negotiate ways in which to bypass their ‘host’ country’s restrictive social stratification system and to negotiate their individuality with their co-ethnics.

4.4.7.4 Television

In addition to music, I was also interested in the participants’ preferences in television. Here there was a relative homogeneity of tastes among the participants. They said that together with the Asian channels they enjoyed watching popular mainstream genres such as sitcoms (Friends), ‘reality shows’ (Big Brother), or soaps (Neighbours, Eastenders and Hollyoaks).

These programs are very important in their lives. For example, Raswan, Muslim participant, positions Eastenders next to the Koran and the Ramadan in his self-identity collage:
‘Eastenders’ is also central to Asim’s life.
A  I watch in my spare time. Eastenders I’m a big fan of, Hollyoaks yeah now and then I watch this as well.
Q  You chose two British soaps.
A  Soaps yeah.
Q  It is a bit different lifestyle between Hollyoaks and Eastenders.
A  Eastenders is in a rough area yeah, Hollyoaks is mainly Liverpool, bit of a posh area.
Q  Do you find it relevant to your life in any way?
A  I think if it was my life I’d be more ... towards Eastenders because some of the story lines even though I’m not from London but with Hollyoaks its too much posh and it’s too much ... maybe when I was a student because they do a lot of student stories in there, at that point. But now I’m more of an Eastenders person. (124-156)

The existing research into television consumption stresses that viewers have considerable freedom to interpret the text in different ways. Viewers, David Buckingham (1987, p.154) argues, ‘actively seek to construct their relationship with the programme on their own terms’. Buckingham explains that an important aspect of giving meaning to a programme is talking about it with peers. The young people he interviewed watched the soap EastEnders because everyone around them was talking about it. EastEnders was a regular topic of discussion in the peer group, and
to a lesser extent in families, and thereby had become an important part of the youngsters’ daily social lives.

In line with the concept of ‘cool Islam’, Anissa recognises the importance of television soaps for her social identity and expresses her hope that her English white neighbours will be able to see through her traditional Muslim appearance and understand that she is ‘cool’ individual. She brings in Eastenders as ‘evidence’ for her desired social identity:

A: You know obviously there is things that I don’t do but then I do want my neighbours I would like them to know I am the same as them. Obviously I don’t do certain things but I’ve got this like
Q: In what way are you the same as them?
A: I go out, I do this, I study, I’m sharp, I’ve got, I watch TV, I watch TV programmes, Eastenders or everything but I like to socialise because I think a lot of people think. (Anissa 1151-1159)

Gillespie (1995) conducted an ethnographic study in London with British-Punjabi participants. Her findings suggest that the Australian soap Neighbours was one of their favourite television programs. Gillespie said that watching the program led to a ‘lot of gossiping’ about its characters and storylines (Gillespie, 1995, p. 142). In the process, young people compared their own lives to those of the soap characters. Their ethnicity played a vital role in those comparisons. Some interviewees decided to distance themselves from the ‘western’ values of the soap and oriented themselves towards the Punjabi ‘parent culture’, whereas others felt involved with the soap characters’ lives and used Neighbours to make ‘translations’ between Punjabi and ‘western’ values.

A: That’s (points to his self-identity collage) just the TV programme ‘Friends’ the American sitcom. That was quite inspirational ... it was like a positive sort of thing.
Q: What was the positive thing that you have taken out of that?
A: You’ve got six people there with different personalities, characteristics but they have that, everyone is equally different in a sense. It’s one of those things I still don’t know which one I’d probably say is my favourite in a sense. Everyone brought something to it. It is a good sense of friendship and stuff. That’s why I think it was really good. They had someone who was sarcastic, someone who is more into his education, someone who is a bit more lays
about, but everyone had an equal sort of sense. And that was, you know I watched it for quite a long time. I’ve always seen that in a positive sort of influence in a sense, that friendship like that, closeness.

A    I actually like Chandler a lot. He’s quite quick and witty but that’s what I mean there is a part of all three that I think you like sort of thing. (Bally 1787-1808)

These comments indicate that television programs such as Neighbours or Eastenders help individuals to actively construct their self-identities: ‘talking about soap opera is constitutive of identity in that young people negotiate through talk shared understandings about how to ‘go on’ in their society as persons within social relationships’ (Barker, 1997). For the black and Asian participants in Barker’s study, a range of identity experiences came into play while watching soaps. Because these programs gave participants the opportunity to talk about different issues in their lives they were able to cross-cut social structures such as ethnicity, gender and age when for example they talked about storylines concerning relationships and sexual behaviour (De-Bruin, 2006).

4.4.8 Football and British identity

*Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.*  (Bill Shankly past manager of Liverpool FC)

‘The point about football in Britain is that it is not just a sport people take to like cricket or tennis or running long distances. It is inherent to people. It is built into the urban psych ... it’s not a phenomenon; it’s an everyday matter ... the way we play the game, organise it, and reward it reflect the kind of community we are’  (Hopcraft, 1988).

As the quotes above show, football is a hugely important to living within Britain, acknowledged as England’s national game and receives unrivalled media attention (Bains, 2007). Its level of appeal to all ethnic minority groups and to the wider population suggests that the sport could provide a powerful means of promoting greater interactions between people of different backgrounds. In so doing football could help to create a sense of shared identity between South Asian and other British people in their neighbourhoods. ‘My main focus is most likely on football because in this country that is the main sport. Wherever you go they’ve got people
Indeed, recent research shows football has become an increasingly popular and socially significant leisure activity for many British South Asians. For example, the findings of a survey conducted by Bains and Evans (2008, p. 8) reveals that 68.9% of British South Asian respondents stated that football was their favourite sport, among both males and females (figure 4.37).

Findings of this research support Bains and Evans (2008) ideas; all male participants play football in their free time. The Self-identity collages of Asim and Bally reflect the importance of football in their life:

Figure 4.38 Football in Asim’s and Bally’s lives

Asim’s self-identity collage    Bally’s self-identity collage
In his interview Bally claims: ‘football probably shaped my life quite a bit’. (216).

The level of interest in football suggests that it is a point of common interest that could provide an excellent means to bring people of different backgrounds together. However, despite the popularity of the game there has been little improvement in the figure of British South Asians accessing football at all levels. The disparity between the popularity of the sport and the low involvement of south-Asians in playing football in or attending live matches suggests that there are factors which are preventing the second generation of British South Asians from engaging with the sport in the same ways as their white peers. This section will explore the narratives that are used by the participants when discussing football in the context of British identity.

Football interacts with issues of race, ethnicity, nation, locality and consumption to construct new articulations and experiences of ‘British South Asianess’ of the participants. The findings of my research on this issue calls for new explanations that no longer essentialize and dichotomize different cultures but that, instead, appreciate how these elements are actively fused to create specifically British Asian identities and lifestyles in the 21st century.

4.4.8.1 Second generation British Asian and professional football

In the past two decades, the lack of British Asians within professional football has received the attention of many academics (Maguire 1991; Bains and Pate, 1996; Johal, 2002; Asian Football Forum, 2005) and public bodies such as the FA. Currently, there are just four British South Asian players playing professionally in England, and only 20 are enrolled in Premier League academies (Mail Online 30th March, 2011).
These numbers are strikingly low if we take into consideration that the South Asian community comprises over three per cent of Britain’s population.

Burdsey (2007) explains that this situation has been created by a number of factors including, the pervasive influence of racism and the marginalising effects of hegemonic ‘whiteness’ in football over the last fifty years. Ali gives the example of racist comments made by the Spanish coach, Luis Aragones, about the French player Thierry Henry: ‘

Look at Spain not even with Muslims they’ve got an issue with any person with brown skin because of the, I’m not sure if you are familiar with you know when England played the football match...The coach of Spain Football Association was talking about Thierry Henri was like, I was like you just don’t want to be doing that. (Ali 433-438)

Secondly, the absence of community members from professional football as players, coaches, managers, administrators and directors has meant that they have been excluded from the contact networks that characterise the game and have facilitated white, and to a lesser extent, African-Caribbean participation. Consequently, their limited social and cultural capital means that the football world remains unfamiliar or inaccessible (Long and Spracklen, 1996).

Burdsey (2007) and Bains and Patel (1996) in their ‘Asians can’t play football’ report explain that another obstacle to integration of South Asians in football was misconception of their body shape. They give examples that highlight how the popular myth of physical inferiority among South Asians is hindering their chances in football. Bains and Johal (1998) argue that scouts and coaches have preconceived idea about Asian footballers that adversely affect the way they look at this group of players. Wills (1980) supports this when he describes how South Asian boys were thought of as having a ‘generally smaller and slighter physique’. Bains and Johal (1998, p.46) claim that this perception prevents Asian kids being recruited by football academies.

Bally explains why he thinks these football professionals are wrong:
I used to play a lot of football and I still do and it’s like even karate something like that has helped me in terms of not just physically, but also in terms of mentally you are more sound. So I mean sometimes now I probably haven’t got the stamina as I’d like. I mean certain things like, I mean a bit more will power. I see a lot more people that are probably quicker and should be able to last longer than me but when it comes to it they don’t have the will power to keep running when they are really tired while I had the determination, yeah. (Bally 221-227)

Johal (2002) argues that when large international tournaments such as the World Cup come along, it often reinforces the media’s stereotypical view of certain countries, and this in turn become representative of their players. For example, South Americans are seen as ‘naturally gifted’ and ‘unpredictable exhibitionists’. Persons of British South Asian background, are seen as ‘submissive, naturally placid and physically frail individuals’ (Johal, 2002, p.160).

The report also shows that although Asian boys were playing football in comparable numbers to all other groups, participation was outside the recognised mainstream football ‘system’ and so scouts within football clubs would not be able to scout Asians boys with considerable talent (Bains and Patel, 1996, p.50).

The general feeling among the study participants was that South Asians will not have a chance to get into professional football because of discrimination, judgment and lack of acceptance.

There is a lot of discrimination that people might not like to admit to but there clearly is. .... Football is a sport in which there is a lot of money in football. It is obviously dominated by a lot of English white people or a lot of foreign people now but British Asians there are so many good players that I know that could make it into but they just don’t get the opportunity simply because there is not much interest. You don’t get much scouts coming to watch them play. (Asim 827-833)

He then continues to describe how lack of acceptance from the white boys in the club prevented him from get into his local academy. ‘

A If you are playing a sport like football you need to play it as a collective sport. Now if there is discrimination against you and people are not going to be passing you the ball and people are not going to be taking you seriously you
can’t possibly. It’s frightening that in this day and age as well it happens. It happens a lot.

Q Did you experience it when you played football?
A Especially when I did trials for Rochdale on some occasions because probably only about two Asians there including me. You can tell in a sense when you’re not getting a lot of passes that you should be getting. So they push you to the side type of thing. Which okay fair enough I mean what can you do. (Asim 837-842)

The participants also felt they were less likely to receive practical and moral support in their football development in comparison to their white and black peers. Overwhelmingly, it is accepted that first generation Asian immigrants actively discouraged their children from getting involved in football (Pilger, 2007, p.94), as parents steered their children toward ‘more respectable careers in law, accountancy and medicine’. These traditions have centred on a work ethos with the goal of social mobility, in order to gain independence from ‘white controlled jobs’ (Fleming 1995, p.35) and in order to succeed ‘education is held in very high regard’ (Ghuman 1999, P.83). Burdsey (2004) explains that because the first generation had little interaction with football, they simply did not understand the processes of gaining entry to a local club or how their child could progress through the footballing world

4.4.8.2 Getting involved in community football

Johal (2002, p.161) argues that despite the relative lack of British Asian sporting success during the time the first generation came to England they recognised that sport, especially football, was an effective means to maintain and promote social inclusion (Collins 2004). Bains and Johal (1998) explain that South Asian communities found it difficult to integrate and gain social acceptance into the football world of Great Britain in comparison to the Afro-Caribbean communities that immigrated to Britain at the same time. Although Afro-Caribbeans also experienced racism along with numerous other barriers within football, they could look to a small number of black players as role models; this was a luxury which Asian community did not enjoy. They say: ‘ Unlike their Afro-Caribbean counterparts, there was no evidence of Asian role models, no players of international repute whom white British people could identify with. Whilst Afro-Caribbean immigration also encountered problems when
playing in white football teams, they were undoubtedly assisted in their ability to converse in the same language, the wearing of similar clothes and the worshipping of the same nominal God’ (Bains and Johal, 1998, p.51).

Back et al. (2001) explain that the difficulties of gaining inclusion to amateur football were even harder than entry to professional football for British Asian players. This was because of their inability to take part in the off-field social activities of their white teammates, Back and his partners define it as ‘lack[ing] the appropriate cultural passports’ (Back et al., 2001, p.41). Taking part in off-field social activities requires inclusion in traditional football-related activities such as drinking, socialising in pubs, and team nights out. These activities are considered part of what Burdsey (2007, p. 764) describes as being ‘one of the lads’. Johal (2002) explains that this exclusion from social events which are a ritual part of male bonding can frequently leave Asian players isolated from the main group.

Not all the participants felt excluded from these social events; Bally, Ali, Raswan, Mirza and Asim all take part in team parties and meet regularly with their teammates. ‘Yes [we] still carry some friendships, we play football together, we socialise together. So again we go out together. Yeah we try to keep in touch. Everyone is busy, everyone is working but when we can get the time we do get together’ (Mirza 470-474).

Asim says that he does not feel that alcohol is too big an interruption for socialising:

A  My football team is a mixed team. It isn’t just an Asian only team; it is 50/50 and there is no difference. I was leader in all of them. That’s the way I am I don’t see any difference.
Q  And they don’t mind you not drinking alcohol when you go out?
A  No they accept that I don’t drink. (Asim 897-902)

Bains and Patel’s (1996) research reveals that 64% of Asian players had experienced racism whilst playing football and Bradbury’s (2001) research supports these findings. Holmes (1991) explains that white communities harboured a great deal of hostility and resentments towards the foreign immigrants, and, as a result, penetrating the ranks of white football teams at any level was near impossible. Pilger
(2007, p.97) explains that although racism has almost been extinguished from the professional game, in the amateur leagues it remains a ‘cancer’.

Bally describes his experience with racism in the community football league:

I play 11-a-side football as well and I’ve noticed even around Derbyshire when we’ve got a predominantly Asian team, got a few white people, black people some people from different countries playing in our team we go to like Heige slightly out of Charleston, outskirts of Derby and stuff in the more village rural areas...We used to go and the amount of racial stuff that you hear ‘Paki this and Paki that’ and once we even heard like ... half time we heard say like ‘make sure you hit that Paki one’ who thinks he’s a bit hard, he thinks he’s a bit of a big lad this and the other’. And someone heard, one or two of us heard and we told ... and ... as the second half just kicked off and he went and pissed off because obviously they’d been raised like that. Because you could hear the fans were drinking and calling us about 1.00pm. And they were singing come on England, come on England like we were both from a different country. We are all from here anyway. It was like that kind of stuff and you could hear them going ‘hit the bastard’. And you knew it was because you were Asian ... . So in that sense in terms of you know the prejudice is there ... . A lot of us were quite young then, kids we were playing against men and you’ve got 10/15 fans who were drinking and they obviously felt they were in a position to throw abuse. It can easily turn violent so it’s like if you feel like. (Bally 1483-1519)

Bally continues: ‘When you do have areas like that you do still see people will still speak to you normally and are okay but it’s just the majority feeling is that you know you are not welcome. Because even sometimes we drive through the town just to get to the football pitch the amount of people that turn and look at us. And it’s like we’re just driving cars, it’s not like. Yeah it’s like five Asian cars come together’ (1617-1624).

Historically, some of the British South Asian players felt that the problems described compromise their progression on the pitch and they struggled to gain access to local football clubs. The result was the establishment of all-Asian football leagues (Johal 2002, p.162) which allowed the participants to play in an environment where they were more comfortable. This in turn has led to further problems; Garland and Rowe (1999, p.7) explain that the establishment of the all-Asian league prevents Asian access into the game. They claim that by failing to integrate into mixed race leagues Asians are not only isolating themselves from routes into football, but society in general. More young players and their parents will need to take it on themselves to move to already established Sunday league teams. From this platform they will be
able to compete with boys of different ethnicities at a higher standard of competition.

4.4.8.3 Identification with the local club

In globalised culture, geographic boundaries tend to recede as nationally, or internationally dispersed fans have virtually simultaneous access to media texts and online forums in which to socialise. In most cases, the physical proximity of the viewer to the local texts seems trivial, if not irrelevant (Guschwan, 2011). Conversely, some claim that football-fan culture remains firmly rooted in notions of locality. Despite global trends of ‘de-territorialization that weaken the spatial connections of cultural practices, identities, products, and communities’ (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009, p. 34), the local team always plays against the team from ‘over there—down the street, from another city, across national boundaries, or from another continent’ (Dunning, 1999, p. 5). Various scholars (Kraszewski, 2008; Maguire, 2005; Williams, 1994) have argued that the local club symbolises local identity. Teams, at all levels, claim to represent local community as they compete for pride and glory at the expense of their geographically ‘othered’ competitors.

Football clubs constitute an intriguing site for fans to construct and perform local identity within contemporary culture (Crawford, 2004). First, the teams are visible symbols to which community members may attach notions of local pride (Dunning, 1999). Second, football matches are popular public rituals in which people regularly and actively participate (Gaffney & Bale, 2004, p.13). Few public rituals allow for such large-scale public co-presence, and even fewer are as consistently effervescent or provide ‘ritualized, embodied engagement, that is, singing, shouting, gesticulating, feasting, and costuming. Third, football matches show human drama staged with heroes and villains, neatly packaged into discrete, media-friendly units (Rowe, 2004, p.5). Finally, the popular appeal of the sport bridges many cultural differences in ways that few social initiatives can. Though the cost of attending professional sports matches is becoming increasingly prohibitive, viewing games on TV or following the team in the news requires relatively modest expenditure.
However, football-fan communities must be understood within the context of globalising forces marked by cultural disruption, fragmentation, and international flows of people, ideas, technology, and money (Appadurai, 1990). Dunning (1999, p.7) claims that the growing significance of football may be that it responds to identity need, ‘a type of need which, for increasing numbers of people, is not met elsewhere in the increasingly secular and scientific societies of our age’. Crawford (2004) describes communities of sports fans as ‘neo-tribes’, a term that bridges traditional notions of collectivity with present-day society. Similarly, Maguire (2005, p.3) asserts that the need for identification through sport ‘may be symptomatic of the sense of insecurity people feel in an increasingly globalised world and their rejection of more cosmopolitan values’. In this context we can understand Bally’s choice to present Manchester United close to the word ‘me’ in his self-identity collage.

Figure 4.39 ‘Me’ and Manchester United - segment of Bally’s self-identity collage

Within this context it is interesting to explore the integration of British South Asians into these football-fan communities and the ability of these fan communities to unite local people from all ethnic and cultural groups in support of a single team. Although the lack of British Asian professional players is evident, the number of South Asians taking part in football culture has been making steady progress (Football Task Force, 1998, The Premier League, 2008; Bains and Evans, 2008, p.8).
Much has been written about the tribal behaviour that surrounds supporter affiliation to football clubs around the world (See Garton Ash, in the Guardian, 12 October 2006). Ashe explains that the focal point of this tribal identity has been geographically based, with football clubs relying on local communities to form the mass of their fan base (Bains and Evans, 2008). Today, many of the housing areas which have high South Asian populations are located in the immediate locality of football stadiums, meaning that these communities are on the doorstep of the clubs which are supposed to represent the area (The Premier League, 2008). This provides an opportunity for British South Asians to get involved with the local fans’ community.

However, most football clubs recognise that the number of supporters they attract from ethnic minorities is still not in proportion with either the local or national standard (Welch et al., 2004, p.40). Burdsey (2007) describes the attempts to increase the number of British Asians attending matches; these revolve around the idea that clubs can make themselves more welcoming environments simply by celebrating ethnic diversity and offering items that are perceived to make British Asians feel more comfortable, such as serving South Asian food and bringing bhangra bands in as half time entertainment. However, from the testimonials provided by Burdsey’s participants it is apparent that there is a fine line between meeting the desires and requirements of different groups and being seen as patronizing and tokenistic (Burdsey, 2007, p.16). As the participants make clear, the many factors that contribute to the absence of all minority ethnic groups from the football grounds are too deeply rooted to be overcome simply through such provision.

The research that attempts to find the main reasons for the limited involvement of South Asians in local football communities has identified a range of reasons to explain their inhibition including racism, lack of safety and concerns raised by their parents (Bains and Evans, 2008). Views such as: ‘Mostly whites go to matches and there is a lot of drinking and racism’ (Sonia line 123) suggest that the traditional British supporter experience, with the involvement of pubs and drinking, can be problematic and exclude British South Asian participation.
I don’t think I probably be able to go to watch football match because of the sort of people because it is mainly white men and you know you’ve got the hooligan thing so you kind of feel out of place. I don’t think, I don’t think I feel comfortable in that sort of environment going to watch football (Anissa 1245-1250).

Bains and Evans (2008) claim that while the most common reason for English white supporters to go to a club’s home matches was the opportunity to support their local club (The Premier League, 2008, p. 20). The level of support of South Asian English supporters for local teams was strikingly low. The largest British South Asian fan base was reserved for England’s ‘Big 4’ teams, who have dominated the top of The Premier League and monopolized the lucratively coveted Champions League places recently.

Bain and Evans (2008) explain that these ‘Big 4’ clubs not only represent the most successful teams on the pitch, they have also developed into highly successful businesses, growing their club’s ‘brand’ in England and abroad. The prominence of these strong footballing brands on television screens, combined with the proliferation of official merchandise, makes it possible for people to align themselves with these clubs and show their support without attending live matches. For the participants, whose families do not have a history of supporting their local team, and who do not attend live matches because of the reasons mentioned above, these clubs are far more accessible than local sides (Burdsey, 2007).

This preference for the strongly branded global clubs is in line with Sekhon’s (2007) claim that British South Asians prefer strong brands. These strong brands are considered important for those products that are going to be seen by others and used in the public domain. This is linked to the participants’ self-concept and particular purchase behaviours that help to enhance their status in the South Asian community. A good example is Asim when he discusses his consumption of football gear as symbols and evaluates products in terms of their status value. ‘and those shoes have to be the big labels so Adidas or Nike or Reebok. But other lower labels the make of the shoes is not as good as the other ones. You know you are spending 15-20 pounds more. I spend that bit more and get a better quality that I’m
comfortable with’ (Asim 1247-1251). Brands and different makes are chosen based on their public image and are linked to other users of that product or brand in the Asian community.

As mentioned before, a very important source of inspiration for the construction of identities is celebrities. Breese (2010) states that: ‘Celebrities are more than successful commodities whose images are created and maintained by the entertainment and media industries’. According to this view celebrities are ‘meaningful symbols, modern-day totems, through which we talk about ourselves and our society in the public sphere’ (Breese, 2010, p. 340). Therefore, understanding of global celebrity influence can help us to understand the influence of globalised markets on self-identity.

Celebrities are symbols by which we narrate, negotiate, interpret our collective experience and establish boundaries. The main interest here is to learn what type of football celebrities the participants have chosen to identify with. The findings suggest that the participants identify with global football stars rather than local ones. Asim (who lives in Rochdale) chose Ronaldo who plays for Real Madrid as his main inspirational character: ‘Ronaldo I would say because he has got a lot of different aspects to his game. He is always exciting. He is always doing something different and he’s a good player (Asim 1182-1184).

Ali (who lives in Rochdale) chose Roy Keene: ‘It is the toughness and the competitiveness because when I am in sports in most of my life I am very competitive and using Roy Keane’s strength and his toughness as an inspiration (Ali 1198-1203).

Bally (who lives in Leicester) chose Veron the star of Argentina that played in England and Spain and now playing for Estudiantes de La Plata in the Argentinian league as his inspirational character:

Figure 4.40 Bally and Veron
The relative popularity of the large global teams and players over local teams means that the potential for local clubs to bring diverse communities together to share a sense of local identity linked to their geographical location remains unrealised. The social interactions that take place when people gather to watch or play the game provide a great opportunity for breaking down barriers and enabling people to develop a shared bond and identity. If people are supporting their teams ‘remotely’ then this limits the opportunities for positive social interactions that engaging in communal activities such as sport can afford.

4.4.8.4 The national team

With relatively low levels of affiliation on the basis of locality, the relationship of the participants with the national team come into question. The relationship between football and the construction of national identity is particularly significant (Wagg, 1995; Duke and Crolley, 1996; Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1999). It would, therefore, seem likely that the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood would have considerable consequences in the context of the national English football team. The remainder of this section examines the implications of these relations for the British identity of the participants.

A number of authors have highlighted how popular manifestations of ‘Englishness’ are often deemed alienating or irrelevant to ethnic minorities, whether in wider society (e.g. Gilroy, 1987; Gilroy, 1993; Back at el. 1999) or in the footballing arena (e.g. Carrington, 1998; Carrington, 1999; Williams, 1999). Furthermore, some interesting and seemingly contradictory findings emanated from the weeks
preceding the 2002 World Cup football finals in Japan and South Korea. In a poll conducted by the British newspaper ‘New Nation’ (June 2002) targeting its black readers on the subject of national identity and footballing alliances, readers were asked ‘If it came down to a direct choice between England and Nigeria who would they prefer to be knocked out of the World Cup?’ 67 per cent of the respondents favoured an English exit ahead of a Nigerian one. The readers were equally divided with regard to the team they want to win the trophy. Interestingly 20 per cent of the respondents opted for Brazil (The Guardian 28 May 2002).

In his article in The Guardian 07/12/2004 Carvel proposes that this indifference toward the England team would be equally, if not more, evident among British South Asians. Carvel (2004) gives the example of international cricket, where a substantial number of British South Asians support their country of origin particularly when they are playing against England (Werbner, 1996; Crabbe and Wagg, 2000). Supporting South Asian national teams remains both a significant source of their non-English identities and the symbolic link to the sub-continent for many. Crabbe and Wagg (2000) explain that supporting the cricket team of their country of origin enables the celebration of tradition and feelings of continuity with the nation from which their parents or grandparents migrated. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity for them to distance themselves from those elements of ‘Englishness’ with which they feel uncomfortable. As Werbner (1996) points out: ‘It is in the field of sport, through support of the (Pakistan) national team, that young British Pakistanis express their love of both cricket and the home country, along with their sense of alienation and disaffection from British society’.

Findings of this research reveal the same attitude to the national football team. The participants express sense of alienation from the national team. Bally justifies this attitude and links it to his experience with racist England fans:

I think that [experience] put me off a lot of them because even when I’ve watched programmes like you get football hooligans the majority of them are quite racist and there is a lot of racial stuff that goes on and to me it is like I then prefer when England lose because to some extent because the same people that had been jumping up and down mouthing off saying this and the
other they shut up and sit in a corner... We went in to a pub and there were a couple, I mean generally English fans are okay, there were a couple that I could tell were coming racial banter and stuff. And they are saying oh we don’t need that black player in the team we’re better with a white. And you could tell they were saying this and while they were winning I think it was against France, I can’t remember what year it was it was in the World Cup was it or European. They were winning, they were singing God Save the Queen in the pub. And it was like there is no need for that kind of stuff. And that was pissing me off because I actually wanted England to win and then the funny thing is they lost in the end 2 – 1. Zidan scored a penalty and I was like-yeh. (Bally 1452-1466)

The case of the Lightweight boxer Amir Khan, perhaps the most famous British Muslim sportsperson at the moment, provides a strong illustration of the complex nature of identity for young Muslims in England. Since winning a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics, the British-Muslim-Pakistani Khan has become a national figure. Khan emphatically defies the ‘Tebbit test’ proudly sporting both the British and Pakistani flags as he enters the ring. He publicly claims that he can be fully British whilst still holding a link to his ancestral home. In this context, Khan offers insight into multiple identities and what it means for him to be simultaneously British, Muslim and Pakistani (Sardar and Masood, 2006).

The presence of Muslim players in English professional football leagues has been aided by the influx of players from Africa. However, despite this trend, the overall numbers remain low. When asked, the Muslim participants were aware of all the Muslim players who play on English teams yet despite having retired at the end of the 2006 World Cup, Zinedine Zidane was identified by most as their favourite footballer. Others identified were the Islamic converts – Robin van Persie and Nicolas Anelka followed by the Egyptian, Mido. These figures demonstrate that young Muslims have a high level of awareness of the players with whom they share a religious identity.

Interestingly, most of the participants, in keeping with football fans across the world, identify with the successful and popular national teams in international football. Brazil, one of the strongest global brands in the football world, is often cited as people’s favourite national team, along with Argentina, France, Holland and Italy to a
lesser extent. These findings are in line with Bains and Evans (2008) who found out that for many British South Asians the idea of representing a country of their dreams was indicated by their wish to represent Brazil, France, Italy, Argentina, Portugal and Spain.

Figure 4.41 National football choices

For example Bally would like to play for Argentina and he puts the picture of Maradona in his self-identity collage. None of these respondents had stated any personal or family connection to these countries when describing their nationality. These findings contradict the claim made by Sepp Blatter (2000) the FIFA president who said that international football is about national identity. For many people the dynamics which determine support for a national team are more fluid. Factors such as the standard and style of football, interest in individual players representing the teams, as well as people’s ancestral and family ties are just some of the factors that have an impact.

4.4.8.5 Football and British identity conclusion

The focus of this section was on the place of football discourse in the life of the participants. Based on the understanding of the special place football has in British lifestyles I have tried to find out if the link to football affects affiliation with British identity. The conversations with the participant on this subject involved four themes that have been identified by the main scholars of this area (e.g. Johal, 2002; Burdsey, 2007; Bains and Evans, 2008) and include: the belief of the ability of South Asian players to get into professional football academies, participating in community
leagues, attending matches of the local clubs and support for the national English team.

The findings reveal that the participants position themselves between different discourses. All male participants have adopted enthusiastically the discourse of football and were engaged in playing football, supporting clubs and identifying footballers as inspirational figures. However, this did not change their perception of British identity. None of the participants support their local clubs but one of the global clubs instead. Interestingly, their participation in the global brand community has offered them the opportunity to affiliate with their white British peers who support the same club. The same pattern could be found in the participants’ support of the national team. None of the participants supports the English team but one of the national teams that enjoy global status. Some of the participants were part of a mixed team with white British friends and enjoyed the social side of team activities while others felt that the racist comments and discrimination were difficult to stomach and preferred playing in all Asian leagues.

These findings raise doubts regarding the strategies designed to facilitate the involvement of British South Asians in football and point at some inaccurate conceptions that hampered the success of these strategies. I would like to claim that marketers can learn from these mistakes and consider their implications on the design of marketing strategies. First, discourses about ‘Asianess’ and representations of them in football possess an inherent essentialism in that they refer to the community and locate British Asians as a homogenous, monolithic entity that possesses a common culture. As Bauman (1996, p.21) notes, ‘the tendencies to reify the ‘cultures’ of ethnic minorities, to stylize pseudo-biological categories into communities, and to appeal to popular biological conceptions of culture are not difficult to substantiate in British politics and media. Almost any copy of a daily newspaper will contain mentions of ‘the Muslim community’, ‘the culture of Afro-Caribbean’, or the ‘Asian community’ and its ‘culture’’. This problem has received detailed coverage in Fleming’s (1994, p.164) work on British Asian involvement in sport, where he uses the concept of ‘false universalism’ to refer to occasions when
the process of ‘logical induction is applied inappropriately’, and on the basis of limited evidence ‘huge generalisations’ are made.

Second, it is evident that, in trying to create and promote policies that focus on the involvement of second generation British South Asians in football, many anti-racist organisations actually adhere to stereotypical representations of, and assumptions about these communities. When they focus on the hegemonic discourse they tend to perceive British Asians as living in a hermetically-sealed ghetto, that denies them access to British football’s established practices and commodities. Their lives are interpreted as being structured predominantly by the cultures, traditions and religions of their parents’ countries of origin, thus not only denying them the agency but also ignoring their position as members of a dynamic, and eclectic ethnic culture that is influenced by British and wider global practices and consumer cultures (see e.g. Nayak, 2003; Din and Cullingford, 2004). Dominant discourses dealing with the integration of South Asians in British football thus tend to reproduce what Bauman (1996, p.1) calls ‘ethnic reductionism’. This refers to situations where: ‘Whatever any ‘Asian’ person was reported to have said or done was interpreted with stunning regularity as a consequence of their ‘Asianess’, their ‘ethnic identity’ or the ‘culture’ or their ‘community’. All agency seemed to be absent, and culture an imprisoning cocoon or determining force’.

Third, whilst they are usually labelled ‘anti-racist’, policies aimed at increasing the involvement of second generation British South Asians often represent no more than a form of creating multicultural football policies. Anthias and Lloyd (2002, p. 2) claim that the two ideologies should not be dichotomized; instead they should be positioned along a continuum of eradicating discrimination and prejudices, and celebrating ethnic and cultural diversity. As Bulmer and Solomon (1999. p. 8) point out: ‘the meaning of race and racism needs to be located within particular fields of discourse and articulated to the social relations found within that context’. It is then necessary to see what kinds of racialised identifications are being formed within these contexts. In no way can we claim that these identifications relate to natural communities, or that one notion of ethnic identity is more legitimate than others.
Rather, they constitute moments where community and identity are defined within the context of football.

Alexander (2002, p. 567) argues that we need to recognise individual diversity within Britain’s South Asian communities and at the same time not lose sight of the commonalities of ‘experience, socio-economic, spatial, cultural, even emotional, which exist’. An appreciation of this dialectic and its implications are crucial in seeking to improve the effectiveness of strategies designed to increase the participation of individuals and create a more inclusive football environment.

4.4.9 Summary of findings on British Identity

‘Proud citizen’ versus ‘marginalised member’ of British society:

- The participants are ideologically invested in mainstream British politics. They trust the parliament and local councils to an even higher level than do white British because they compare life in Britain to their country of origin and feel that in India and Pakistan political culture is more corrupted. All the participants appreciate the physical and social security of England and feel that it is much better place to live than their parents’ country of origin. Female participants emphasised the value of gender equality and the freedom women enjoy in England.
- Second generation British South Asians identify with aspects of British society, whilst rejecting the idea of ‘being British’.
- Attitude to their British self-identity can be understood in terms of benefits and services. Being British was evaluated along the dimensions of meeting personal needs and interests: British university education, government support, and the freedom of movement that comes with a British passport were some of the main benefits mentioned.
- Participants struggle to develop a national identity based on the idea of a common history. Rather than accepting the discourse of British history some of the participants would like to see recognition of South Asian history by the British society.
Experience of racial and religious discrimination and rejection versus close friendships with white peers:

- Participants feel that because of visible differences they are not perceived by mainstream society as British. The participants describe feelings of exclusion based on their skin colour and religious background. The main narrative that emerges from the participants’ stories is that they feel discriminated against but want to be acknowledged as British. Yet racists were seen to ‘remind them who they are’.

- Multiculturalism was seen by all the participants as something positive and good not only because it allowed those with various ethnic backgrounds to be included, but also because it may help to break down barriers of racism, by acknowledging the makeup of British cities and the acceptance of cultural differences.

- The idea of multiculturalism does not necessarily mean a shared set of values or beliefs. The participants express feelings of alienation from some of the British ways of life and values. Main issues include modesty of female public appearance, alcohol, family life, and extramarital sexual relationships.

Multiculturalism and globalisation vs. the local:

- The increasing interconnectedness of nations and cultures not only leads to an increasing contact between individuals from different cultural backgrounds but also to an increasing contact between cultures within the individual person. Different cultures come together and meet each other within the self of one and the same individual. This leads to the formation of a multiplicity of cultural positions or voices coming together in the self of a single individual.

- The individual is constantly in negotiation with multiple cultural resources that contribute to the construction of their identity. Part of this process is the contribution of celebrities who play a role in identity construction. The participants identify mainly with global celebrities from the American entertainment industry. However, in the process of identifying with celebrities,
personal identities are actively negotiated by the speaker and different categories are used flexibly.

- The globalisation of consumer culture, the penetration of global media to all parts of the world, and an increasingly globalised beauty industry put pressure on these participants to attain specific standards of beauty. This imposes a feeling or need either to be like whites or to project an image intended to make them desirable to the ‘normal’ white opposite gender. Norms of beauty were most often based on whatever is typical of white beauty: light skin, height, legs, or body type.

Traditional vs. British and global lifestyles:

- Fashion is one of the main ways through which the participants negotiate their self-identity. While their attire is used by parents and others to monitor religious and ethnic ‘purity’ it also helps them to position themselves within the general British community. By resisting the rigid dress codes of their parents and by creating new styles the participants were able to open up possibilities for challenging the binary oppositions between ‘British’ and ‘Asian’ clothes.
- The participants positioned themselves between two alternatives: those who were loyalty to the traditional foods of their parents and those who preferred British food. The traditionalists emphasised the element of familiarity with the taste, freshness, attention, care for the family members, and hard work of Asian food while those that preferred British food emphasised the wide variety of foods, the need to eat healthier food, convenience, and the sense of adventure in eating non-Asian food.
- The choice of grocery store reflects the conversation between British and traditional food. Most participants go to both mainstream supermarkets and traditional grocery stores routinely.
- In addition there was a third voice influencing food consumption, namely, the global discourse of healthy eating and wellbeing as perceived by western governments and lifestyle media.
- Many of the participants spoke in strong terms about their abstinence from
alcohol, thereby indicating that this is an especially meaningful statement of identification with the community, tradition and religion. Alcohol consumption is seen to reflect the difference in values and moral codes of behaviour between white British society and the South Asian community.

- An alternative discourse for alcohol consumption has emerged from the findings. Alcohol and socialising became cultural metaphors for freedom from ethnic-cultural norms and provide opportunity for self-expression. Friendship groups then became more important than family considerations.

- Hip hop emerges as an important lifestyle in the British South Asian youth reality. The main themes in their songs were opposition to neo-colonialism and criticism of non-whites who ‘sell-out’ their identity.

- Some of the participants are constructing ‘black’ identities by appropriating black-inflected hip hop culture and responding to their own particular social/personal needs for collective identity affirmation.

- Within the growth of hip hop culture a new hybridised Muslim identity has emerged that can be described as ‘cool Islam’, designed to promote a more modern, decidedly less fundamentalist collective identity for young Muslim. This is an apparent attempt to counteract popular stereotypes of Muslim young men in particular. ‘Cool Islam’ is directly linked to hip hop and a black identity that is reflected in the musical tastes, values, and attitudes of the Muslim participants.

- Most watched soap operas such as ‘EastEnders’ because everyone around them was talking about it. EastEnders or ‘Hollyoaks’ was a regular topic of discussion in the peer group, and to a lesser extent in families; it had thereby become an important part of their daily social lives.

Involvement vs. rejection and racism in football:

- The findings about football reveal that the participants position themselves between multiple discourses. All male participants have adopted the discourse of football and were actively engaged in its various activities. However, involvement did not change their perception of British self-identity. All of the participants support one of the global clubs rather than their local
club; as fans of a global brand they had the opportunity to affiliate with their white British peers who support the same club. The same pattern could be found in the participants’ support of the national team.

4.4.10 British identity: conclusion

The purpose of my discussion on the British identity of the participants was to evaluate the interpretivist conceptualisation of ethnic identities. Interpretivist scholars view South Asians (sometimes discretely entitled Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi) as a well-defined community that is integrating into another community (British society). These models assume that the superiority of national culture will pressurise ethnic minorities to conform to the host society’s value system. The acculturation approach claims the predominance of national cultures over the long term.

The findings of this section support Jamal and Chapman (2000) who suggest that there is no ‘single’ everlasting outcome of acculturation. The participant that could be described as ‘segregated’ at one moment of their life when for instance they speak about their abstinence from alcohol and the difference it symbolises from white British culture could also be described as ‘assimilated’ when, for example, they describe how they feel very British when they go to visit India or Pakistan and witness the corruption of political institutions. Similarly to Askegaard et al. (2005) the findings of this section place the models of acculturation that divide consumers into stable categorises into doubt. Second generation British South Asians negotiate differences between cultural categories while forging identities derived from these differences (Askegaard et al., 2005, p.169). Asim can be categorised a ‘Danish cookie’ (Askegaard et al., 2005) when he describes his enthusiasm for watching ‘Eastenders’ or when he describe his dedication to fitness and healthy nutrition. At the same time Asim can be categorised as typifying ‘Greenlandic hyper-culture’ with his keen observation on Islamic rules, dislike of alcohol and disapproval of white English family values. To make things even more complicated Asim can be categorised as a ‘best-of-both-worlder’, in Askegaard’s terms, when he says that his favourite foods are curry, fish and chips, or chips with curry sauce.
Describing second generation of British South Asians as acculturating into the British society is about setting boundaries that locate the parameters of difference and sameness between South Asian community and British society. Those with whom we share an identity are marked out as the same, in contrast to those who are different. Sameness is stressed by the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ and ‘our’ pronouns which draw in those with whom the identity is shared and exclude those who are characterised as ‘others’ (Woodward, 2002). Establishing secure boundaries include naming those who are included and those who are excluded. Findings of British identity cannot support the view that the participants see ‘South Asian’ as ‘us’ and ‘British’ as ‘Other’ in all cases all of the time. Sometimes the ‘us’ was South Asian, in other cases co-religion members, sometime just the close circle of friends that is made of white, black and Jewish friends and sometimes ‘us’ is the global supporters of Manchester United or the followers of Chinese martial arts.

This research views the British identity of the participant as a site where flows of meaning-making discursive practices (Hodge and Kress, 1988) become organised. However, this organisation is not fixed, there are numerous discourses in the culture, representing given particularities, which claim their rights to understand the British. The participant has to be considered within that network of determination. For example identification with hip hop lifestyle involves appropriating black identity, creates the concept of ‘cool Islam’ and influences consumption of western brands identified with this lifestyle. Much as it is in Laclau’s (1996) description, the individual is not a locus, or position within the discourse. Instead that person is situated in between discursive practices; none of them is capable of identifying the subject totally.

Social actors understand and experience their social identity, their social world and their place in it discursively. In the context of this section, I would like to claim that the participants experience British identity through the choice they make between many discourses available to them. The particular strength of this anti-essentialist explanation is that it recognises that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices available. Discourses can compete with each other or they
can create distinct and incompatible versions of reality. My research findings reveal numerous discourses dealing with British society and British life, each one of which is representing given particularities, and claiming rights to construe the British identity of the participants.

The British identity is articulated through the themes of ‘belonging’ and ‘rights’; moreover, these rights are expressed in egalitarian terms. The British identities expressed here are a hybridity of universality and difference, universality based on having equal rights as British citizen and differences that come with religion and ethnicity. Their claims to difference then are circumscribed within their British citizenship and the belief that Islam should be recognised, accepted and tolerated rather than vilified and constructed as alien.

What is being expressed by the participants is not so much a contest between ethnic identity and British national identity or between difference and universalism, but rather a political contest over the meaning of Britishness. The participants’ identities and claims are diverse. Their identities are hybridised, synthesising South Asian culture, religion, British and global culture within their construction of British identities. Nowhere could this be clearer than their enthusiasm for English football combined with their pride in religion and ethnicity whilst striving for inclusion, as equal members, in the discourse of football. Whilst they articulate their ethnic distinctiveness they do so through asserting their universal rights through being British.

Interpretivist theories in marketing place much emphasis on integration, uniformity, and commonality. However, I would like to emphasise the individual nature of the process of identity construction. Recent debates about culture and identity have all too frequently ignored this and consequently my concern is on recognising that identity is neither static nor essentialised, but flows through different discourses; these characterise the new cultural realities that are being constructed in a global environment.
4.5 Hyphenated Identity vs. Floating Signifier

Guy Perron: Isn't Hari Kumar the permanent loose end? Too English for the Indians and too Indian for the English?

Nigel Rowan: That's rather Sarah's view. Frankly, I think he is more interested in being just his own type of Indian.

From: The Jewel in the Crown

This quote describes the tension between South Asian and British culture and raises the question of how British South Asian individuals manage these different and sometimes contradictory worlds. The previous discussion focused on the construction of ethnic, religious and national identities. Marketing literature generally suggests that these identities are difficult to reconcile (for example: Penaloza, 1994; Askegaard et al., 2005). Marketing literature treats the acculturating individual as holding a hyphenated identity (Bhatia, 2002). According to this view, second generation British South Asians have to balance the different expectations coming from the two sides of the hyphen: South Asian and the wider British/Western society (Bhatia, 2002). Writers such as Askegaard et al. (2005); Oswald (1999) and Penaloza (1994) describe the ethnic minorities in their research as caught between contradictory or polarised ways of living with family and community demands on the one hand and the expectations of the host culture on the other. The early acculturation models in marketing typically examined issues such as the varying degrees of acculturation on consumption patterns (Deshpande, et al. 1986; Hirschman, 1981; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983).

One of the main works in this area was Penaloza (1994) who describes how Mexican immigrants of various demographic and psychographic characteristics come to the United States. Penaloza claims that these immigrants are influenced by dual sets of agents aligned with their culture of origin and the immigration destination. Penaloza says: 'Consumer acculturation is a phenomenon that occurs over time and spans two nations (1994, p.52). Eventually new immigrants exhibit consumption patterns associated with the existing culture, their previous culture, or a combination of the two cultures. The first generation, the immigrants, initiate the acculturation process...
by crossing the national border between one country and another while the second and third generation cross invisible boundaries between subcultures including the majority and the ethnic minority communities.

Other models in marketing, such as Thompson (2002), focus on possible outcomes of the acculturation process. Thompson suggests two potential responses to these pressures; one is the assimilated reaction where an individual behaves as part of the host society, while the other is the group rejection where behaviour remains in line with the culture of origin. Askegaard et al. (2005) describe 'post-assimilationist' models (for example: Penaloza 1994; Oswald 1999) that focus on the outcomes of the acculturation process. Most of these models use Berry's ideas of acculturation outcomes (1980) as a point of reference and explore how consumption patterns reflect these modes of acculturation.

In her conceptualisation of consumer acculturation processes, Penaloza (1994) argues that through socialisation, and its emphasis on processes such as modelling, reinforcement and social interaction, acculturation agents are able to shape the behaviour of the ethnic individual. However, ethnic individuals have two conflicting sets of consumer acculturation agents: one corresponds to their culture of origin and one corresponds to the existing culture therefore they experience the competing pulls of two cultures simultaneously.

The description of ethnic minorities as positioned between two separated set of cultural values is called by some writers 'hyphenated identities' (Bhatia, 2002, p.55). Hyphenated identities, as a subject, draws attention to cases where meanings and cultural identities converge or are blended, thereby forming new ways of being. This area of social science recently attracted the attention of social research to second generation South Asians (for Verkuyten, 2005, p. 150). Ghuman (2003) explains that second generation South Asians tend to employ various different hyphenated identity categories in order to describe their ethno-national identities; for example, those of Pakistani descent often juxtapose the national component of self with religious identity (i.e. British Muslim) and those of Indian descent frequently combine their national and ethnic identities (i.e. British-Indian). Hutnik and Street
(2010) observe that the majority of their participants were rooted in both ethnic and national identities, thus highlighting their hyphenated identities.

Jhumpa Lahiri (Newsweek 3rd of June, 2006), the Indian-American Pulitzer-winning writer, describes her own hyphenated identity as an 'intense pressure to be at once loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, approved of on either side of the hyphen'. This loyalty conflict can be seen in Sannita’s description of her cultural reality. She describes her good relationships with 'white' people: 'I think I tend to get on better with people in the white culture' (142). Later she says: 'I tend to pick friends who aren't from my own religion’ (145). Consequently, she experiences pressure to be loyal to her co-ethnics: 'Some Indian Sikhs probably think I'm too white' (138-139). Sanetta admits to have conflicting feelings: ‘Sikh friends can relate because they have the religion in common which the white culture don’t understand' (149-151). She then describes her need to explain her religion to her white friends: ‘I think some [of her white friends] you do have to explain to, like you've got other priorities in life, you have to explain why you can't go out' (152-154).

Sannita concludes: 'I think I'm right on the line’ (149). On one hand she wants to be part of a Sikh circle of friends and on the other hand she wants to be an equal member of her white circle of friends. She negotiates two contradicting worlds and tries to fit them together. Her self-identity collage reflects these feelings.

Figure 4.42 Between fashion discourses
In their research of Greenlandic immigrants Askegaard et al. (2005) claim that the negotiation between the acculturation forces on both sides of the hyphen- Danish and Greenlandic produce different identity positions. One of them is 'best-of-both-worlder'. This position seeks to intertwine present Greenlandic culture with Danish modernity.

In my research Summayah is a good example of the ‘best-of-both-worlder’ when she says: ‘I really like mixing cultural food with my Asian cooking. You know, Italian, French and stuff’ (125-129). Summayah is an henna tattoo artist and she claims that her work is also influenced by both worlds: ‘It’s all about how you put it together that will give the impact at the end … sometimes when you put in two different cultures together in the design, it just gives a better impact rather than just keeping it as one (937-941).

4.5.1 Evaluating the hyphenated identity concept

However, it is misleading to assume that second generation South Asians will choose in such defined ways between two sets of cultures or will be passively manipulated by their cultural circumstances (Shaw, 1988). Research shows that many second-generation immigrants have an active role in the complex decisions regarding their cultural affiliation and their preferred roles within society (Bhachu, 1985; Lindridge et al., 2004; Askegaard et al., 2005; Ustuner and Holt, 2007; Jafari and Goulding, 2008). Askegaard et al., (2005) claim that the ethnographic data in Penaloza's research did not support a clean national distinction between Mexican and American cultures for individual or collective consumption patterns. Others have supported this criticism of the hyphen concept and rejected the view that sees British South Asians individuals as 'stuck between two cultures' (Ghuman, 2003; Harris, 2006).

Instead, a complex combination emerged for each individual and for each product/service category in which market offerings took on different meanings when situated relative to the dual consumer cultures. Askegaard et al.,(2005, p.3) say that 'Informants' consumption patterns were inherently eclectic, drawn from US and Mexican cultures and are more accurately viewed as the result of rather complex
dynamics of cultural influences, marketing strategies, and individual agency than as culturally determined or determining’. The findings of my research support this observation. For example Razwan’s description of his food choice: ‘I eat the curry and chips at the same time, I do that and I love it.

Q:  So do you see it as two separated sets of foods ... where you eat Asian or you eat English or you intentionally mix the two?
A:  No I don’t yeah I don’t see that as a as an issue I say yes nice okay I eat together whatever comes yes I eat [laughs].
Q:  So it’s not clear border?
A:  No there’s not a clear border there no, no’ (921-930).

Penaloza (1994) herself admits that 'in the global, postmodern era consumer behaviours increasingly presuppose border crossing as consumers, products, and marketers transcend national boundaries ... given the increasing occurrence on international trade, it is increasingly difficult to speak of United States and Mexico as independent, autonomous cultures' (p.51). Harris (2006) also rejects the perception of clearly hyphenated categories such as 'British-Asian' that for him 'continues an entrenched mindset which envisages two entirely separate strongly bound and homogeneous cultures' (Harris, 2006, p.1).

Razwan gives a few more examples regarding the blurring borders between the two cultures of his life. First he describes the heterogeneity of his social circles:

‘Err my friends are combination ... I’ve got my university friends who are a mixture of all sorts of ethnicity and cultures that’s one group I’ve got and then I’ve got my work group friends and then I’ve got my friends who are in Rochdale ... who are home friends so it’s like I’ve got kind of three very different groups at this present stage. But all of them are mixture of cultures.

Q:  So are you, do you feel you are the same person with each one of them?
A:  Yes.
Q:  Or maybe you need to change something in the way you behave or feel?
A:  No I’m the same person in each one’ (Razwan 675-700).

that the meaning of brands and goods are organised into consensus-building systems. She explains that it is impossible to fix the meaning of brands according to cultural categories because these meanings shift in relation to the ethnic subject's movement between the categories. Oswald (1999) concludes that structural semiotics fail to account for such instability, grounded as it is in the modernist assumption of a rational self that transcends racial, sexual and cultural ambiguity.

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) explain that although hyphenation, or in their words, 'compartmentalisation', of ethnic identity is likely to constitute an effective short-term strategy for dealing with multiple identities, there is empirical evidence to suggest that there may be some contexts in which these identities will come into contact; clear separation and border-drawing between these categories consequently fails. Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) give the example of arranged marriage as illustration. They explain that arranged marriage is generally associated with South Asian identity; however, this might pose difficulties for hyphenation among second generation British South Asians. These individuals could take a stance on this ethnic issue, derived from their British national group membership. This would dismantle the boundaries allegedly constructed between British and South Asian identities and cause them to enter into contact. Such dissatisfaction with the notion of 'compartmentalisation' (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010, p. 1) leads these writers to argue that 'multiple identities are re-construed by social actors rather than rigidly compartmentalised in accordance with the social context'.

Bhatia (2002, p.55) supports this criticism of hyphenated identity and suggests that 'immigrant parents and their native-born children are constantly negotiating their multiple and often conflicting, dialogical voices, histories and ‘I’ positions' (2002, p.57). The nature of identity displays different tensions between existing past and present identities. Similar tensions are identified and described by Jafari and Goulding (2008) as the 'torn Self'; a term, which is used to express the contradictory and paradoxical nature of identity formation among second generation UK based Iranians.
Annisa describes how she continuously feels an outsider on both sides of the border: ‘When you go to Pakistan they don’t see you as Pakistani’s they see you as British but when you are in England they don’t see you as, you are seen more as a Pakistani ... I’m stuck in the middle of nowhere’ (527-537).

However, many scholars warn that the description of second generation ethnic minorities as caught in an empty space is misleading. For example Drury (1988, p.388) disagrees with the description of the second generation as: ‘simply caught up in a vacuum, in some sort of no-man's cultural desert’. Bhachu (1985, p.172) also rejects the portrayal of second generation British Asians as young people who lead ‘between and betwixt styles, suffering their parents' imposition upon them of alien cultural values’. More recently, Lindridge et al. (2004, p.232) have offered an alternative description and portray these individuals as 'cultural navigators' who are enjoying the wider variety offered by their multiple worlds and are able to adapt behaviour and consumption practices through multiple identities.

Anissa describes such cultural navigation:

Yeah I do make an effort in like I wouldn’t wear a different scarf, a hijab with a different like sort of clothes because I’d probably match my hijab with the shade of my clothes and stuff like that. It is the same with Asian clothes and with western clothes. I try to match my, I think that’s the main thing just trying to match the hijab with the right clothes in the morning. That takes me longer.

Q: Obviously you’ve got more than one hijab ... I guess.
A: I’ve got loads. I try to wear a hijab that actually matches or will suit the clothes that I am wearing. In a way actually I think that is something different than I said a minute ago but yeah I do try to mix and match’ (Anissa 795-808).

Anissa gives another example when she describes her choice of make up:

It depends what I am using when I am wearing the makeup. If I am going out with my friends or something I will probably wear more makeup then, even if it is Asian or English clothes because makeup kind of goes with everything I think. It just depends on what colour clothes you are wearing. If I am wearing brown, I could wear brown eye shadow and stuff and if I was wearing brown western clothes I could use the same thing. (Anissa 1442-1448).
Sannita gives a similar example in her choice of make up: ‘The consideration I took into account was the range of colours. I had to consider if it went with my skin tone. There was also the east/west influence to wear in a variety of events. I saw this in Marie Claire magazine. It has a big spread there and attracted me because of its range of colours and stuff’ (323-327).

Figure 4.43 Make up choices

Figure 4.44 Western influence on Eastern fashion style

Important in this description is the concept of situational ethnicity which reflects specific contexts in which choices are made and the significance of evolving process where differing demands of the two cultures are balanced (Stayman and Deshpande, 1989). The writers identify situational contexts in which choices are made. Here ethnicity is not seen just as a 'stable sociological trait of individuals that is manifested in the same way all the times, but also as a transitory psychological state manifested in different situations (Stayman and Deshpande, 1989, p.363).

Asim describes how he switches codes when he moves from context to context.
A You’ve got a set of friends that you mainly play football with which we could say are sporty friends. You’ve got another set of friends that you go to clubs with and maybe so yeah I’ve got different sections of different friends.

Q So does it put any demands on you to behave differently or get dressed differently or in different words what is ‘cool’ in one group can it be ‘cool’ in the other group?

A In a sense yeah I suppose because the way you see for example your friends who go out clubbing or to social clubs they would dress in a slightly different way to the friends that you would go footballing with because they would be more in their tracksuits or their shorts or their football spots wear whereas your friends that go to the club would be more in their casual wear in terms of straight jeans, straight Nike shirts and probably take more care in their appearance in terms of make sure their hair is good. So it is there is a difference. So you have to look after yourself’ (Asim 521-536).

Thus the situation takes on an important role in personal decision making; what one wears, how one behaves in public and private, personal decisions made around marriage and one's social life are context determined. McGuire and McGuire (1978) present the salience of ethnicity as altering in response to the similarity or difference between a person's ethnicity and that of others in a particular situation. Research in this area focuses on the particular structures that pervade the context of the individual; this area of research explores the situations and affiliations that the ethnic individual identifies with, including family, work colleagues, friends (co-ethnic and British), their wider social neighbourhood and religious communities.

Jaz describes her situational consumer behaviour: ‘I have separate, shoes and sandals for saris, separate shoe and bags for saris and suits and separate shoes and boots and everything else for English clothes’ (Jaz 749-751).

Nisha: Yeah, thing as well like, cos I’ve got different aspects of friends I’ve got different groups of friends they don’t all get on with each other so I’d have to keep them away from each other...No definitely I enjoy it, I mean I would like them all to get on but, it’s never going to happen, you know that’s the way things are in life so, it’s more enjoyable having the different groups, getting away from each group sometimes but, enjoying it as well’ (Nisha 1106-1117).

Oswald (1999, p.315) offers an explanation to this behaviour and suggests that immigrants negotiate differences between the two sides of the hyphen by choosing
when and where to wear their ethnicity. She develops Laguerre's (1984, p.106) explanation that Haitian immigrants use their ethnicity to their social and economic advantage sometimes identifying with their ethnicity, sometimes more with the dominant culture. Oswald explains that the participants of her research display 'culture swapping', when code switching becomes the immigrant's means of negotiating the differences between two cultures. Oswald says: ‘Ethnic consumers swap cultures by swapping goods, moving between the two sides of the hyphen rather than blending these worlds into a single homogeneous identity’. This observation is in line with Penaloza's (1994) findings about Mexican immigrants who adjust to American culture without completely assimilating or differentiating their cultural identity from the main stream.

Askegaard et al. (2005) explain that the Haitians in Oswald's research, have used consumption both to hold onto their former Haitian identity and also to appropriate, albeit reluctantly, an American identity'. In my research, Mirza describes the same pattern with his grocery consumption: ‘To be honest we do both shopping, basically you get to Asda and then we go to an Asian supermarket. Basically we have to go to Birmingham to get our meat, halal meat cos you can’t get it in Asda … you don’t get certain spices you came after, you get them in a shop (Mirza752-761)

These findings suggest that the participants experience their world as one blended world rather than two separated worlds as Oswald claims. For example, Razwan describes his consumption of TV entertainment: ‘I watch all sorts because err we’ve got Sky basically so Sky has everything all the both mixes of worlds so...

Q: So can you find yourself moving between err Bollywood film and, and James Bond film for example?
A: Occasionally. I do flip over, it’s one of those things when I know when I want to watch a Bollywood I watch a Bollywood when I watch a western err English movie I watch it. If it’s something that I like though I’ve seen before I would watch it again so but if they’re on together sometimes I tend to flip over (792-809).
Asim describes the same experience:

I think it’s actually better for me because you’ve got two sets of entertainment, for example we want a choice so we’re watching Bollywood movies and Hollywood movies. Whereas a lot of English they can watch Bollywood movies but they’ll probably watch a few sub-titles and might not enjoy it much because they don’t understand it. But because we are bilingual, we’ve got two languages we get the best of both...I think we got a richer menu. We’ve got two languages. A lot of people here are just fluent English. They don’t know another language but maybe they do but they won’t be fluent in it as much. Whereas I am fluent in English and I’m fluent in Urdu. (Asim 1007-1017)

Asim tries to explain that he is one person with many sides rather than a different person on each side of the border:

I’m still the same person but for example if I’m playing football then I might just be a bit different side, the competitive side might come out. Whereas I never show that competitive side when I’m going out to clubs because there is no need to. I’m not in that environment, I’m not in that set of mind thing that I have to win that. So my casual friends might not see the competitive side of me because they are not really in a position to see this. Whereas my sporty friends would have because they are in a position to see this. ...Because being a part of a team and we have to win it. Two parts of myself which is...it’s not something that I purposely change its just part of it, it just comes out. So it’s part of who I am which I’m happy with. (Asim 555-569)

Similarly his food choice represents a wider world rather than two different worlds:
‘The best thing about us we can be fluent in making, we can make fish and chips and we are fluent in making curry at home’ (Asim 1133-1136).

My problem with the ‘culture swapping’ mode is its presentation of the consumer as a skillful navigator (Lindridge et al., 2004) capable of switching appearances and consumption behaviours according to the context in which they find themselves. This view assumes that consumers can define the social situation and themselves using words that have stable referents (such as ‘traditions’, ‘Indian’, ‘British’, ‘Western’ and more) and the social categories in their lives reflect an essential underlying identity. By this token there will be stable truths to be found and essence of, for example, femininity or South Asian identity. I would like to claim that this view gives the consumers the power to reflect on social categories in their lives but
not the motivation or the ability to define these categories, or in Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 223) words: ‘an individual is free to create any variety of selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular socio-cultural context and from the models, images and symbols provided by the media and by individual's immediate social experiences’.

4.5.2 Self-Narrative

Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) explain that speakers acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. Individuals shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying story lines are taken up. Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradict other possible selves located in different story lines. Like the flux of past events, conceptions people have about themselves are disjointed until and unless they are located in a story. Since many stories can be told, even of the same event, we each have many possible selves.

This description is in line with Ricoeur (1992, p.112) who suggests, that the most fitting response to the question 'Who is the author or agent?' is to tell the story of a life because the enduring identity of a person, presupposed by the designation of a proper name, is provided by the narrative conviction that it is the same person who ‘perdures through its diverse acts and words between birth and death’. The story tells us about the action of the ‘who’ and the identity of this 'who' is a narrative identity. This is what Ricoeur’ terms an ‘ipse-self’ (Ricoeur, 1992, p.112).

This self involves an ongoing process of self-constancy and self-rectification (Kearney and Albano, 2004) that requires imagination to synthesise the different horizons of past, present, and future. The narrative concept of self thus offers a dynamic notion of identity that includes mutability and change within the cohesion of one lifetime. This means that the identity of a person is deemed a constant task of reinterpretation in the light of new and old stories we tell about ourselves. ‘The subject becomes, to borrow a Proustian formula, both reader and writer of its own life. Selfhood is a cloth woven of stories told’ (Kearney and Albano, 2004).
Ricoeur (1995) claims that personal identity always involves a narrative identity. First, narratives draw together disparate and somehow discordant elements into the concordant unity of a plot that has a temporal span. Second, the elements and episodes that a narrative unites involve contingencies. All of them could have been different or even non-existent. Nonetheless, these elements take on the guise of necessity or at least of likelihood because they are follow-able. Third, narratives are made up not only of actions and events but also of characters. Plots relate the mutual development of a story and a character. Every character in a story of any complexity both acts and is acted upon. Finally, a narrative's characters only rise to the status of persons — fictional or real — who can initiate action when someone else evaluates their doings and offers them feedback. Ricoeur says: ‘The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character’ (Ricoeur, 1995, p.147).

We make sense of our own personal identities in much the same way as we do of the identity of characters in stories. First, in the case of stories, we come to understand the characters by way of the plot that ties together what happens to them, the aims and projects they adopt, and what they actually do. Similarly the individual makes sense of her/his own identity by telling themselves a story about their own life. In neither case is the identity a fixed structure or substance. These identities are mobile.

The findings of my research show that every participant had a personal narrative that cross-cut all the discourses to enable the participant to link different elements and give the individual a sense of coherence.

An example is Bally who describes a strong feeling of isolation as a child that affected some of the main choices he has made:

As a young person I think I’ve been put in situations where I’ve felt really out of place, I’ve felt really uncomfortable and threatened in terms of not just physically but this is a an awkward situation. I think it is the feeling of being not helpless almost but you could be vulnerable. Yeah, very vulnerable
because you are somewhere where you are not comfortable which is okay. I don’t mind going different places, I enjoy that, but I am always aware even no matter where you go there is always a part of that that is going to be bad. Derby, most people say Derby is fine and very mixed but I know you go 10 – 15 minutes in the wrong direction and you are heading for trouble. (Bally 1703-1715)

This experience influence’s his life choices. First is his interest in martial arts:

I always heard of the name Art of War, which sounded obviously just interesting Art of War and I read like a little bit about it. And it was basically the philosophies, it can be applied to all parts of life really it’s not literally just for war. But it was like the way they believed certain things like the art of fighting without actually conflict in itself. It’s like ways of resolving things. It’s more to do with mentalities, the way you see things’ (538-544). ‘Karate probably shaped my life quite a bit. (Bally220-221)

Another influence was his approach to fashion. Bally feels that his choices can help him become part of the British circle:

A: I see difference between mine and my Asian friends to be quite honest.
Q: In what way?
A: I mean like one or two of my friends, well the majority of my friends are very sort of track suits, hoodies, a bit more like you’d see hip hop.
Q: Gangsters style?
A: A little bit, not too much. I will wear a hoodie, with me it’s a lot more casual, smart casual. You’ll probably see me wearing a lot of jumpers where they probably won’t. With my white friends I’d say they are about the same (Bally 1249-1262).

Bally links the main narrative of his life to his fashion choice: ‘I do believe that it does help to some extent because in a sense its finding more common things in a way although you’ve already got a lot of things in common you were born in the same place you probably live in the same place (Bally 1682-1686).

The choice of East Enders as his favourite television program is also linked to the narrative of vulnerability that is associated with social exclusion. He explains that watching the program gives him a common subject of conversations with his white social circle.
Ali is another example of a dominant narrative. Ali’s brother was a pilot in the British Air Force and was killed in a car accident.

I’ve got two sisters and then a brother. My brother has passed away in 1999, he was in the air force and he had a car accident and he passed away yeah (22-26)…I was 15. That’s when it kicked in a lot more but before that see my brother he became a pilot and to be a pilot in the air force especially if you are an Muslim Asian is a big thing and people were like you know, they would say things that would make my mum and dad really, really happy like you know wow he’s done it … but people were still be a bit cynical yeah ok that’s fine we’ll see you when it’s done. But when he got it done and he came back in uniform and they went to graduation ceremony and what not and it was, it is something that you know, I can still see them you know, they were really, really happy and my dad was really happy. (Ali 762-771)

Ali describes his brother appreciatively: ‘My brother was kind of like a figure that I looked up to. He was like the first person that I actually looked up to because he was a lot more cooler and he was like you know he had the motorbike, he had the whole thing plus he was good with the girls as well so it was all good’.

The two brothers came close to each other:

‘…and then a month before his death was the actual time when we started like you know, we started bonding as brothers. Because when he came back we were at the same height, same stature like. I actually shared his clothes or he actually wore my t-shirt for once and that was the second time I saw my mum to be really, really happy as in like she could see that you know’…Yeah that I’ve kind of grown up as in we were the same height and we would walk down the street and someone actually said to my mum that you know they look really good together don’t they. It looks like you know the brothers, the group has formed now but it just wasn’t to be and then I kind of, then he passed away and then the family kind of got a bit, it was kind of a shock because it just happened … . Yeah
so that was a shock and it is something that I don’t think my family still kind of got over. (Ali 835-847)

Ali describes two shopping experiences that are influenced by his brother. ‘I am trying to buy a motorbike just all the time because I’ve not had one. I’ve not had a proper motorbike forever because after my brother it was just sold off (850-859).

Ali also told me that he tries to adopt his brother’s fashion style and through that to create the same relationship his brother had with his sisters: ‘My two elder sisters and my brother were a group, now one of my sisters I’d always get her to come with me to buy clothes with regards to anything. I mean I like something maybe a t-shirt or a shirt or whatever and if my sister says yeah that will look alright on you I won’t even bother trying it on’ (Ali 885-896).

In what follows I focus on the self-narratives of two participants. Summayah is 21 years old, a single female who lives in the East Midlands; she is a religious Muslim, her father is the leader of the Muslim community in her town, she wears traditional Muslim clothes and prays five times a day. Saneetta is in the same age, is married, lives in the East Midlands and is Sikh but does not regard herself as very religious. In spite of significant discrepancies between these two women’s life situations and the different positions they occupy both in their family and their social circles they have one experience in common.

Both have reported a traumatic experience of bullying by their peers in school. Ericson identified bullying as taking three specific forms: physical, verbal, and psychological (Ericson, 2001). However, other forms of bullying have been identified including gestural bullying, sexual harassment, and cyber bullying. These forms of aggression toward children can happen in all school years (Ericson, 2001; Shore, 2005).

Research on bullying reveals that there are both immediate and future consequences for the targets of bullying (Gottheil and Dubow, 2001). According to Gottheil and Dubow (2001), those who are targets of aggression are most likely to be depressed, develop low self esteem (Austin and Joseph, 1996; Ericson, N., 2001),
experience peer rejection, school absenteeism, and a continued loss of confidence (Hazler, et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1993) and anxiety (Besag, 1989). According to Ericson (2001), a study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that victims of bullying experienced loneliness, had trouble making social and emotional adjustments, had poor relationships with classmates, and had difficulty making friends.

Regardless of the commonality of the bullying experience, Summayah and Sanetta have offered markedly different accounts of the influence of this experience on their lives and developed different self-narratives.

A Cameron Diaz. I like her style.
Q So her story is not to overcome anything?
A Yes
Q Is she an inspiration for you?
A Yeah. I like her goofiness, her bubblyness. When it comes to movies for example, Charlie’s Angels, the Holiday. I mean I liked her in those sort of movies. And I just think that also it was because she’s also got acne. You can’t really see but she’s got acne. And in the past, I mean, I was so worried about my skin because of acne and stuff. It got to a point I almost relate to Shilpa’s story where you’re bullied as well for your skin and things.
Q Really?
A yeah, and you feel so out of place
Q So much?
A Yeah. You know when you’re kids you’re just ignorant, you don’t understand or respect.
Q Were the kids cruel with you?
A Yeah. I guess that’s why I have Clinique there (self-identity collage).

Figure 4.46 Skincare in Summayah’s collage
A: It’s skincare and stuff. My skin has always been important to me because it’s like, you don’t want to be put out of place. You want to still stay in that...I don’t know how best to use the word... social circle? But you want to say that “I am different as well accept me for who I am too”. That’s how I feel.

Q: Let’s develop this a bit more. So your being in school, was your school predominantly English, Asian or equally...

A: At that time it was mostly white.

Q: So you were very different. How many were Asian like you?

A: From my whole class it was just me, Mariam and Asia. That’s how we became friends.

Q: So you were kind of an Asian island in a white ocean?

A: Yeah. In a white ocean. I mean, I made friends with them. I made friends with the white kids, Lisa Kylie and they were really nice. But it was so different when it came down to outside your class because inside class they knew how you were as a person. And they can get to know you everyday whereas it was within your year and there was, a random person who don’t know, and they are like, what’s on your skin?” “Why have got so many spots”? (Summayah 123-139)

Sannita had a traumatic time in her school due to bullying (self-identity collage below) as well. This is a strong discourse that affects her decisions and choices still. In analysing her discourse many elements such as being part of a circle of friends, being popular, the fear of trusting her own friends and ‘standing for herself’ emerge.

Figure 4.47 Bullying in Sannita’s collage

‘Well some were supposed to be my friends but weren’t because they used to instigate, well initiate the bullying’ (40-41) and later ‘Yes, it’s like they’re supposed to your friends but then ... ’ (Sannita 69).
In contrast to Summayah, Sanetta’s bullies were not predominantly white. ‘They were mixed race as they were Indian, white, Afro-Caribbean’ (61) and later, ‘Strangely enough I think I may be linked to those who bullied me as they were mainly Sikh’ (Sanetta 144-145).

Hepburn’s (1997) research on bullying suggests that the victims of bullying sometime perceive themselves as part of the cause for the problem. Sanetta’s last statement can be understood in this context. She feels that her appearance could be part of the causes for the bullying.

Q So why were they bullying you?
A Well, appearance – it was appearance you know? And it does sort of psychologically affect you because I’m not as confident as maybe I would have been if I didn’t go through that but because I did, it has affected the way that I am as well (50-54).

However, her self-analysis gives us an opportunity to learn how she perceives herself: ‘Maybe they were jealous, maybe they didn’t like what I wore, maybe it was because I was Asian’ (Sanetta 76-77).

She attributes much of her current identity to this event. ‘Those people have a big impact on the way I am now’ (50-54) or later ‘I don’t know the reason, but they did do it and it has affected the way I am. I don’t put myself forward in front of large crowds and stuff’ (Sanetta 77-79).

Both participants emphasise appearance as the main influence of the bullying experience on their adulthood. However the content of the signifier ‘appearance’ is different for each.

Summayah has developed a keen interest in body decoration (self-identity collage fig. 4.48):
A Fashion and creativity are important to me because I love doing henna. You can see some patterns there (fig.4.48). I just like it. Basically, my family always come to me when it comes to celebrations or birthdays.

Q So you do it yourself?
A Yeah. I love doing it. Actually since last year I have been more into it.

Q So you think you would want it as a career one day?
A I would want to, would love to’ (587-601).

Later, she emphasises how important appearance is to her: “That film “The Devil Wears Prada”? I love that film. I was thinking, yeah I’m going to be like that, she changed so dramatically from the ugly duckling to this beautiful swan. So I always refer to myself as that’ (Summayah 652-675).

The first example Sanetta gives for the importance of appearance is her home’s decoration:

A Yes, I just wanted a simplistic style not like my parents house – I didn’t want any flowery patterns and stuff. A lot of people have said my house is very cosy and nice. I just decorated it for months- I worked really hard on it for 4 months and now I love getting compliments on it. It’s very rewarding. It’s my sanctuary.

Q Is it part of the public image part of your need to be accepted?
A Yes, you want other people to come and say good things’ (Sanetta 282-287).
The second example Sanetta gives is her body image.

A This [Fig 4.49] represents gym equipment. Another reason I joined was to tone up, be more flexible and basically self-appeal and change the way I look physically ... Also, there are various brands like Nike with fitter celebrities like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods who are athletic and sporty, representing the brand image. I bought some of these products from the Nike catalogue. It’s more for me to feel better.

Q When you think about your appearance do you have an ideal image?
A I do think slimmer females look more attractive. (Sanetta 303-312)

Figure 4.49 Sanetta’s shopping experience collage

Summayah and Sanetta’s self-identity narrative is in the process of becoming: their identity is continually being produced within the vector of similarity and difference. The ethnicity of the kids who bullied them, the friends, the celebrities they chose for inspiration and others, all these are multiple and proliferating points of difference around which Summayah and Sanetta self-identities could form. The meaning of ‘appearance’ was the result of a ‘complex web of contradictory voices’ a negotiation between religion, ethnicity, nationality and global culture; the meaning of their British South Asian identity is never finished or completed. Identity then becomes a 'cut' or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning which makes contextualised meanings possible.

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, the answer to the question who is Sanetta or Summayah will always remain open-ended and
dependent upon the positions available within one's own and others' discursive practices. The stories through which these participants made sense of their own and lives vary dramatically in terms of language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgments made relevant and the subject positions made available within them.

Each individual identity always intersects those of other identities in the narrative. These intersections can give rise to second-order stories (Ricoeur, 1992), for example, stories about families that narrate the intertwining of multiple individual stories. Similarly, the story by which the participants constitute their own identity shows that their lives are always linked to others, not always in the ways they would prefer. Hence, other persons are always constituents in their own identity and vice versa. Indeed, our individual identities are incorporable into a ‘we’-identity, as, for example, the identity we share as Sikhs, citizens of the United Kingdom or fans of Cameron Diaz. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) suggest that marketing materials can serve as symbolic resources for the construction of these narratives.

4.5.3 Summary of hyphenated identity findings

This section has evaluated the claim that acculturating individuals are influenced by dual sets of agents aligned with their culture of origin and immigration destination. Crossing borders is the central theme that has been evaluated.

My main claim here is that it is increasingly difficult to speak of British and South Asian as independent, autonomous categories. Self-identity of the participants is seen not as a reflection of a fixed, natural state of being but as a process of becoming. Thus, the cultural identity of the participants is not an essence but a continually shifting set of subject positions. Further, the points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating. The meaning of ‘Britishness’ and ‘South-Asianess’ are subject to continual change.

Hyphenated identity of the participants then becomes a 'cut' or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic collection of different discursive elements which makes meaning possible. Self-identity is dependent upon the elements available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices in a given moment.
The stories through which the participants made sense of their own and others' lives are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgments made relevant and the subject positions made available within them.

The field of discursivity is characterised by a multitude of meanings that every element in the discourse can take. This field conditions every object as discursively constituted, while at the same time it prevents attempts to fix their meaning.

The primacy of a specific nodal point is always temporary; the privileged status of one subject position could always be interrupted by new articulations. Most discourses in the participants’ lives are organised around a complex constellation of multiple and shifting nodal points.

The idea of a hyphenated position itself might suggest a well-defined space between discourses on South-Asianess and Britishness. However, the findings of this section articulate only partially fixed subject positions. Subject positions were somewhat fluid processes combining temporary elements from both sides of the hyphen and integrating elements from global culture as well.

The empty signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) is the discursive centre of a privileged element that gathers up a range of differential elements, and binds them together into a discursive formation. Its emptiness makes it possible for it to signify the discourse as a whole.

The participants describe beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one discursive position to another changing the way they think about themselves as the discourse shifts and as positions within discursive elements are taken up.

Each individual identity of the participants intersects with those of other identities in the narrative they tell. These intersections can give rise to second-order stories and therefore the self-narrative in never fixed or stable.
4.5.4 Hyphenated identity - Conclusion

The purpose of this section was to evaluate the description of British South Asian identity as a hyphenated identity. According to this view, the second generation of British-South Asians have to balance the different expectations coming from the two sides of the hyphen. Writers such as Askegaard et al. (2005); Oswald (1999) and Penaloza (1994) describe the ethnic minorities in their research as being caught between contradictory or polarised ways of living; with Penaloza claiming that immigrants are influenced by dual sets of socialisation agents aligned with their culture of origin and their host culture.

According to this view (Penaloza, 1994), immigrants cross invisible boundaries between their own community and the majority society. Important in this description is the concept of situational ethnicity which reflects the specific context in which choices are made and the significance of balancing the differing demands of the two cultures. Market offerings took on different meanings when situated relative to the dual consumer cultures. Thus, what one wears, how one behaves in public and private, and other personal decisions are context determined.

This section presents an alternative view to the portrayal of second generation British Asians as young people who lead ‘between and betwixt styles’ and rejects the view that sees individuals as 'stuck between two cultures'. I claim that the perception of clearly hyphenated categories such as 'British-Asian' is misleading. The meaning of cultural categories is never fixed and stable and it is very hard to draw clear borders between these categories.

The findings of this research reveal a complex web of contradicting discourses of South Asian or British identities full of internal dialogues between different and contradicting discursive elements. Indeed, the description of an individual as ‘British-South Asian’ might suggest a position between two discourses and the term “position” itself might suggest a fully defined space. However, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that articulation can only produce partially fixed subject positions. Subject positions should be regarded as somewhat fluid processes.
Multiple identities are re-construed by social actors in accordance with the social context rather than rigidly compartmentalised. An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. This is different from the description of the consumer as a skillful navigator (Lindridge et al., 2004) capable of switching appearances and consumption behaviours according to the context they find themselves in. Models such as ‘cultural swapping’ (Oswald, 1999) assume that consumers can define the social situation and themselves using words that have stable referents and the social categories in their lives reflect an essential underlying identity.

The alternative view presented here describes the individual as an empty space between articulations. The individual locates her/himself temporarily within a discourse and uses the discursive resources at hand to identify him/herself, but none of these resources is sufficient for the purpose and therefore the individual moves to the next discourse. Laclau and Mouffle (1985) refuses to see the individual as merely a locus, or position within the discourse. He maintains instead that individuals are situated in between discursive practices; none of them is capable of identifying the subject ‘totally’.

Any identity can be viewed as a field in which every discursive formation partakes and in which none of the discourses that construct the identity can fully master the others. These discourses’ centre (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) is empty. The emptiness of the discourse enables it to gather up a range of different elements and bind them together into a discursive formation. With this emptiness the discourse can become universal in its scope, but its meaning cannot be completely universal, since it is only given meaning by the particular elements, which stands in relation to it.

Content of a signifier thus becomes a function of the power struggle between discourses that try to fill the empty signifier with content. The findings of this research suggest that marketing takes part in this process in two ways. First, marketing channels offer contents that compete with other contents for the right to fill the core of the empty signifier at least temporarily. Secondly, marketing offers
inspiration for self-narratives that integrate these elements into a coherent discourse.

Individuals acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying story lines are taken up. Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradict other possible selves located in different story lines.

The process of self-construction that has been described here requires imagination to synthesise the different horizons of past, present, and future. As each individual identity always intersects with those of others in the narrative, second-order stories can emerge (Ricoeur, 1992). Consequently, the participants’ identities are incorporable into a multiple and dynamic ‘we’ rather than being simply a combination of two contradictory stable cultural categories. Although the participants’ narratives were reliant on hegemonic discourses of belonging, they participated in the support of or the resistance to these discourses by both using them and developing their own categories of identification outside of these discourses.
4.6 Summary of findings chapter

My conversations with the participants about their British and South Asian identities revealed multiple dialogues between different discourses. Some of the themes that have emerged were: the tension between traditionalist and the ‘rebel’ - those who would like to break free of traditions, the tension between attachment and rejection of parents’ homeland, adoption of global westernised lifestyles versus keeping community traditions and family’s values. South Asian identity of the participants was full of conflicting voices of different discourses, for example: use of religion as a basis for self identification vs. Ethnic self identification, some of the participant preferred to identify themselves on the basis of specific region in the country of origin of the parents (for example Punjab) others have adapted Pan-Asian identity. The same pattern of internal conflicts has been demonstrated in the construction of British Identity. Most of the participants were proud of their British citizenship but at the same time felt marginalised. Social settings of the participants has reflected the same multi-voiced reality, many of them have two, or more, sets of social circles each one of these circles represents different life styles and traditions.

Football had a special place in the participants’ lives. Here we could see the same pattern of internal conflicts between discourses. Many of the participants have participated in the discourse of football (either as supporter or taking active part in playing the game) and enjoyed the social affiliations that come with football. However, at the same time they were not engaged in supporting local clubs and instead opted to support global clubs and experienced racism when trying to take part in local football activities.

It is clear that the participants could not position themselves solely and continuously within one discourse. Their lived realities involved a complex negotiation between identities to suit temporary contexts. The individual is constantly in negotiation with multiple cultural resources that contribute to the construction of identity. What we have seen is a process of appropriation of the meaning of these cultural resources. For example, the identification with celebrities, who play an important role in
identity construction of the participants, is negotiated by the speaker and appropriated into specific narrative to be used to support individual identity discourse.

In summary, the presentation of ethnic minorities by traditional marketers as positioned between two communities (majority and minority) looks problematic. The meaning and boundaries of ‘community’ were constantly renegotiated, revised, redefined, depending on specific situations and set of circumstances that each individual or group encounters. The participants describe the creation of new forms of community due to the convergence of particular circumstances. This change offers new ways of participating in community life. Traditional sources of identity, which have been related to nationality, family, and geographic proximity, are now being replaced by more fluid identities based on the construction of life styles that express ethnicity through music, fashion, and movies. These findings support the anti-essentialist claim.

4.7 Conclusion

The purpose of my research is to explore the ways individuals who are the second generation of South Asian families in Great Britain perceive and describe their self-identity. To be able to answer this question I have explored the social and cultural resources that are used by the participants to find inspiration during this process. I have tried to find out how the participants perceive the messages they get from the different cultural categories in their lives (e.g. religious, ethnic, national, global, life styles) and answer the question of how they deal with the contradictory messages that come from these categories. Finally I have tried to find out what, if any, place brands, possessions and commercial messages have in the process of self-identity construction.

The marketing view that I have evaluated in this chapter, perceives participants’ identity not as self-generating or internal to the self but as cultural ‘all the way down’ because it is constituted through the process of acculturation. Individuals have the power to reflect on the categories that construct their self-identity but not
the ability to construct these categories, or in Markus and Nurius (1986, p.223) words: ‘an individual is free to create any variety of selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular socio-cultural context and from the models, images and symbols provided by the media and by individual’s immediate social experiences’.

Identity, according to this view, is a collective phenomenon; it involves fundamental and consequential similarities among members of a group, category or segment of the market. For example, Indians share the same culture, Pakistani share the same religion; Muslims keep the same dietary laws, and so on. This may be understood objectively or subjectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action (Walker, 1994). The same idea can be found in the work of Penaloza (1994) on Mexican immigrants in the USA or Askegaard et al. (2005) on Greenlandic immigrants to Denmark.

Segmentation strategy understands identity as a core aspect (individual or collective) of ‘selfhood’ or as a fundamental condition of social organisation. It is something all people, and groups, have or ought to have, or are searching for. It is something people and groups can have without being aware of it. Traditional marketing explains that the actual range of identities available to individuals and the groups to which they belong may not be wholly under their control. In this view identity is a reflection of a fixed, natural state of being.

The findings of my research contradict this claim and support the anti-essentialist position (Hall, 1996). In this view, identity is seen not as a reflection of fixed and natural categories but as a process of becoming: ‘There is no essence of identity to be discovered; rather, cultural identity is continually being produced within the vectors of similarity and difference’ (Hall, 1996, p.35). Cultural identity is not an essence but set of continually shifting subject positions. Further, the points of difference around which cultural identities could form or be differentiated are multiple and proliferating and this deems the segmentation strategy as almost impossible to achieve.
In this chapter I have demonstrated that shared experiences do not necessarily lead to common meanings or similar consumption decision-making process. For example when discussing religious life and keeping Islamic laws Summayah expresses her religious observance by buying meat only in halal food shops while for Asim observing the same laws means buying fish burgers in McDonalds and not any other type of meat products. It is clear that the experience of being a member of the segment under discussion is not a stable experience and there is no clear consensus between the members of the category about the practices of the discourse under discussion.

Further, there is no clear border between cultural categories. In the section on South Asian identity we have seen Samera defines herself as Muslim and differentiates herself from non-Muslims; later, in the same section, she says she is more Pakistani than Muslim and differentiates herself from the non-Pakistanis. Further along, Samera says that she cannot see a real difference between Pakistani identity and Indian identity and develops a discourse of Pan-Asian identity. When we move to the section on British identity she defines herself as a local girl from Burton and differentiate herself from people in the South of England. At the same time she feels marginalised from the British society although she admits that her inspiration for her fashion buying and part of her food comes from the British society and Hollywood actresses. The same pattern of negotiation between conflicting voices can be seen in Anissa’s statement about her link to the country of origin of her family (Pakistan):

‘I do like Pakistan, like the country I like Pakistan in the same I like England but I don’t generally like the Pakistani people sometimes, the way they are’ (Anissa 579-580).

The meanings the participants attach to ‘race’, ‘religion’ ‘Britishness’, masculinity and so forth are subject to continual change. Identity then becomes a ‘cut’ or a snapshot of unfolding meanings. If we take for example the meaning attached by the Muslim participants to their own: ‘British Muslim community’ we can see a wide range of interpretations. Ali relates only to the Muslim Shiite as his own community, Mirza and Samera identify the world’s global Muslim community as their own
community, Summayah relates only to the Muslims that live near her house as her community, and Sonia identifies the Muslims that live in the north of England as her own community.

Consequently, segmentation strategies that attempt to constrain consumers to a single, consistent, stable way of behaving are 'likely to lead to marketing failure' (Firat et al., 1997, p.197). The individual consumer has to be viewed as the result of discursive production. As there are numerous discourses representing given particularities, which claim their rights to construe the social, identity has to be considered within that network of determination. This explanation is different from Oswald’s situational identity (1999) concept that sees the individual as moving from one context to another and changing her or his behaviour like a chameleon adapting himself or herself to the environment it occupies. Here, the self-Identity of an individual is not merely a locus, or a position within the discourse but a description of the individual as situated in between discursive practices (Laclau and Mouffle, 1985) none of which is capable of ‘totally’ identifying the subject.

According to this view the identity of a person is a position between discourses, an empty space between articulations. The individual uses discursive resources to identify him / herself, but none of these is completely sufficient for the purpose. For example, the participants (Ali, Asim, Nisha, Jaz, Nisha) who have identified themselves most closely with British discourse and admired the British culture of law and order demonstrated how they are guided by this discourse in daily life. Yet, they were strongly linked at the same time to the discourse that resents discrimination and marginalisation toward South Asians in British society and expressed a feeling of alienation from British society. Others were passionate about British football culture (Asim, Mirza, Anissa) but felt like aliens in relation to the culture of local football fans whom they viewed as racist hooligans. The meaning of cultural categories is the result of ongoing negotiation between many discourses, never a finished or completed process.
The explanation I present here overlaps with Laclau’s conception of ‘the field of discursivity’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111). According to this view the identity of the participant can be viewed as a field in which every discursive formation partakes and in which none of the discourses that construct these identities can fully master the others. Ali, for example, locates himself in a cosmopolitan discourse when he describe himself as a liberal and multicultural person then in another moment he is a very proud Muslim Shi’ite with a strong identity rooted in his tradition and family history in Iran; later he identifies himself using the resource of Hollywood’s stereotype of an American Air Force pilot who wants to fight for his country (England), ride a motorbike and enjoy ‘popularity with the girls’. Similarly Asim in one moment locates himself in a very religious (Muslim) moral discourse and in another is a keen body builder who dreams of dating a British blonde nude model. Even the sports discourse of Asim is full of conflicting voices; in the British identity section he describes how proud he is to be the captain of his school’s football team as well as the captain of the cricket team and in the section on football discourse he describes how he feels marginalised as a victim of racism against Muslims in football.

Consequently, a person identifies her/himself depending upon the discourses available within one’s own and others' discursive practices. I accept that some of the differential relations between the subject positions have more force than others. A single subject position may, in a particular context, become privileged such that the meaning of other subject positions becomes increasingly defined through their relations to that position. Borrowing the Lacanian conception of the “point de capiton,” Laclau and Mouffe call this privileged position a ‘nodal point’. The nodal point in a given formation increasingly acts as one of several discursive ‘centres’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p.112). The nodal point tends to exercise a totalising effect on contiguous positions such that they partially lose their floating character and ‘become parts of the structured network of meaning’ (Žižek, 1989, p.87). For example the Muslim identity of Asim is gaining the influence of a nodal point and it is dominating other discourses when he discusses his dream girlfriend: ‘yeah she will have nice blonde hair, nice figure, she’s pretty ...Yeah. However, he views this
relationship through the lenses of his Muslim identity and continues: ‘but it can be
difficult and maybe she drinks and in our religion you can’t drink so ...’.

Another example is Sanita who had experienced bullying in her school. This part of
her life became the nodal point that affected all other discourses. She says: ‘I don’t
know the reason, but they did do it and it has affected the way I am. I don’t put
myself forward in front of large crowds and stuff’ (77-79). Bullying appears in her
self-identity collage.

Figure 4.50 Bullying

The bullies were from the same community as Sanita and this affected her attitude
toward her community: ‘strangely enough I think I may be linked to those who
bullied me as they were mainly Sikh. So maybe it’s a lack of trust ... I think people
within that culture are quite judgmental’ (144-147). This point also influenced her
attitude towards her appearance and fashion buying (please see shopping
experience collage below)

Figure 4.51 Appearance

However nodal points are different from one’s dominant essential identity in many
ways. No one can predict with exact certainty which subject position will become
primary in any particular historical moment. If, to paraphrase Hall (2000), racial
subject positions offer ‘the modality in which class is “lived”’ in some contexts, in
other contexts sexual subject positions or any other relevant position may be the modality in which race is experienced, class-oriented subject positions may be the modality in which gender is experienced, gendered subject positions may be the modality in which national identity is experienced, and so on (Hall, 2000, p. 35).

In any event, the primacy of a specific nodal point is always temporary; the privileged status of one subject position could always be interrupted by new articulations. While some unusual discursive formations may tend to be organised around a single and relatively stable nodal point most of these dominant discourses will be organised around a complex constellation of multiple, shifting and contradictory nodal points.

My findings depart from the description of community as a clearly bounded entity. Previous marketing writers that have been reviewed in this chapter take the unity of a community for granted. They assume that the community is a harmonious and ‘naturally’ bound collective entity. They ignore power hierarchies within the community and provide no account for the construction of the community’s heterogeneity. These writers tend to consider cultural categories as a complete and closed sign system. There is no moment in this description in which the Lacanian conception of the subject as a ‘subject of lack’ is affirmed. For Laclau and Mouffe, in contrast, the social never takes the form of a complete system or a closed totality; communities, social groups or any other cultural categories are never completely constituted, every formation remains vulnerable to subversive interruption, and the moment of final articulation is never obtained (Laclau, 1990, p.90–1). This allows Laclau and Mouffe to insist, once again, on the contingency of articulation, and on the possibility of subversion even in the case of the most normalised articulations.

Indeed, the description of an individual as ‘British South Asian’ might suggest a position between two discourses and the term ‘position’ itself might suggest a fully defined space between South Asian discourses and British discourses. However, that articulation can only produce partially fixed subject positions. Subject positions should be regarded as somewhat fluid processes rather than fixed location between social or cultural groups (McClure et al. 1992, p.271). In actual cultural relations,
then, we never meet groups of people who are neatly divided up according to the categories that we use to discuss structural relations in our social or cultural theories. Actual individuals have a much more complex identity than is anticipated in traditional marketing theory, for they are positioned at ‘points of intersection of a multiplicity of relations and contradictions articulated by practices’ (Laclau 1977, p.11).

I would like to bring a few examples to illustrate this point of view. The first example is my conversation with Razwan. The subject of our conversation was about his future wife. Razwan’s family had few conversations with him about the subject. I have asked him whether a Pakistani wife will suit his traditional life style better than a British wife. In his reply he presents a very traditional South Asian position: ‘Not matter it would be easier if she is from here err but there’s other err moral and other err there are things that have more far better in people in women Pakistan than here so. I think British Pakistani female became too British ... Some of them ... it’s more you’re able to find more women that are more morally traditionally there’ (1102-1125). He emphasises this preference for a traditional non-British life style when I asked him if he would like her to wear traditional South Asian clothing. He says: ‘She can wear western style, yes, jeans things but nothing too revealing. (Raswan 1132-1137)

However, in a later stage of the conversation where we have discussed how Razwan defines himself and his life values, surprisingly, he defines himself as British:

A: I think my English side is expressed more strongly err I think obviously with the friends I’ve got err I’ve got two very, very good friends who I met in college which are English err and we, we tend to go out on a regular basis, go out eating, go you know do other things err with my university I’ve got a mix of friends there as well err so it, its that English side of mine is, is always there
Q: You could associate yourself with the values of the British society?
A: Err yes ... (Razwan 834-841)
Another example is Jaz who feels disconnected to English society and rejects British values.

Q: ...and how was the social life in school? Could you bring your English friends to your home? Did you visit their home?
A: No, never. It was school friendship ... Yeah that’s it.
Q: But it was never out of the school playground?
A: It wasn’t, it wasn’t I never socialised outside of school, with my English friends, but I did with my Indian friends (Jaz 323-330).

This disconnection from British life does not prevent her from adopting white British norms of beauty.

Another Muslim participant notes that: ‘Yes because people normally ask, you do a survey round and people say what are you, people say British. I like to say I’m a Muslim ... that I rely on my religion’ (Mirza 89-91). However Mirza feels alienated from the British society. ‘When it comes down to when it is like a white area I do feel a bit weird, a bit out I think’ (126). However, when we discuss his future wife he emphasises how important it is for him that she will fit into a British life style.

Yeah she needs to be able to adapt herself, adapt, for example if I do decide to get married in India or find a wife in India I have to make sure that whoever comes with me back to the UK is willing to adapt to British lifestyle and able to adapt herself and be able to sort herself out if she wants to work...If she is not up to date with how UK is at the very minute so basically if I do get a wife from India she might be still in the backer stages thinking the woman has to cook and clean and look after the kids and all that. So she needs to be quite up to date with UK standards (Mirza 227-258).

When we discuss his lifestyle further we find out that Mirza and his sister have much more British and Western culture than he states at first. ‘She just like at the rock stage, like into heavy metal rock’ (349-351). Then he describes his taste in his films and music: ‘But I’m into Hollywood and into proper R and B kind of stuff’ (Mirza 501)

These inconsistencies appear not only in conversation about ethnic issues. For example when Samera describes what she feels about luxury brands she says: ‘And that’s the same thing with makeup I mean I have put like Clinique and Dior there but generally I like all make up, any make up.'
Q: Have you gone kind of the more exclusive brands or what makes brand to you better than others? Is it the, the image of Dior or?
A: In a way I think because it is expensive as well and is meant to be good make I think that’s what. But at the same time I love bargains, I like buying bargains as well so. (712-718). If the next person thinks she is going to a cheap shop I don’t really care because if I like it I am going to wear it what does it matter. (724-725).

These conflicting voices are reflected clearly in Samera’s self-identity collage.

Figure 4.52 Samera and brands

If this anti-essentialist description is correct, it will be futile to try to design a marketing strategy that aims to find consistent, centred, or stable self-images of current consumers let alone one that categorises them on the basis of these stable self-perceptions. Rather, we should find a way to explore the several self-images that a single consumer may subscribe to at different times under different circumstances.

Based on the findings of this research I would like to suggest that marketing could do this in two ways. First, through marketing channels (for example popular culture, advertisements) it can compete with other discourses on the right to offer contents to the empty signifier even if temporarily. Secondly, marketing offers inspiration for self-narratives that integrate these elements to into a coherent discourse. In the next chapter I will discuss the implication of these findings to marketing strategies in general and more specifically to segmentation strategies.
5.0 Chapter 5- Conclusion

The findings of this research call into question the utility of some of the central principles on which conventional marketing, namely, segmentation strategy is based. I make the argument that the radical fragmentation of cultural experiences and self, challenges some of the fundamental principles of marketing orthodoxy and creates a new agenda for marketing, predicated upon personalisation and individualisation of the consumption experience. This is a market reality where consumers will not be the passive recipients of goods and services but the proactive assemblers of signs and symbols.

5.1 The limits of segmentation and targeting

Many writers have discussed the limits of segmentation strategy. For example, Hoek et al. (1993) point out that when a marketer uses segmentation analysis they make subjective decisions about the basis on which to segment the market, and the variables to be used to measure and express this segmentation. They claim that it is impossible to identify one basis for segmentation that can produce better results than another, and there are few guidelines about which alternatives are most suitable for different situations. Therefore, they claim that identifying segments appears to be a ‘fundamentally arbitrary process’. They also go on to cite several studies which suggest that segment membership is not stable over time and that segment identification is frequently not robust enough to withstand small changes in the data analysed.

Wright and Esslemont et al. (1989) have argued that even if segmentation was successful, there is still no logical reason to adopt segmentation and targeting strategy. The only possible justification for segmentation would be that it gave a greater overall market response than any other alternative. However, they claim that segmentation and targeting do not necessarily give the best overall market response. They explain that segments outside the target group are usually exposed to the marketing mix as well and will react to this indirect marketing effort. Therefore, targeting multiple segments might bring better results than targeting one
specific segment. Wright and Esslemont at el. (1989) argue that the optimum strategy might be to produce the marketing mix with the greatest market response rather than focus on the segment with the greatest response.

One of the most important criticisms of segmentation strategy came from the work of Ehrenberg and his colleagues on the patterns of repeat purchasing (Ehrenberg, 1988; Ehrenberg et al., 1990). They have criticised market segmentation and claimed that their findings suggest that members of one target segment will purchase products, which are aimed at completely different segments. Therefore, the critiques of the traditional marketing concept — and, more specifically, of segmentation and targeting — claim that there are no logical reasons to expect that targeting, even the most stable and robust target group, will be more successful than wider approaches (Wright, 1996).

This thesis goes further and evaluates the fundamental assumption of the segmentation strategy, that it is possible to choose a set of attributes for any group of consumers as a sufficient basis for segmentation. This set of attributes must be necessary for the individual’s identity and function (Cartwright, 1968) otherwise there is no justification for using it as a basis for segmentation. Furthermore, I claim that this perception of marketing is essentialist (Hall, 1996) in its nature because it views consumers as the result of a specific category or attribute.

5.1.1 Critique of the concept of segmentation

The marketing concept views social structures, such as gender, nation, ethnic cultures and religion and others as finished objects. Their features have been clarified through long historical processes and they are thought to influence and shape the actions and thoughts of all their members. In this view, culture is something one has and is a member of, rather than something one makes or reshapes through constantly renewed activity. This view of marketing segmentation strategy assumes that a member of a consumer segment will experience stable, clear and continuous meanings, all social and personal contexts.
This understanding has guided marketers in making common-sense predictions of how these consumers might think and what they might do next. However, the findings of my research point at the main weakness of segmentation strategy: social and cultural categories are not fixed and have no clear boundaries. Therefore, consumer behaviour is not predictable because identities are cross-cutting, multidimensional (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995) and fluid (Bauman, 2005). Furthermore, as we have seen in the findings the meaning attached by consumers to these social categories is continuously negotiated.

My findings support the claim that common forms do not generate common meanings (Cohen, 1994). I have shown the limits of the essentialist explanation in earlier parts of my thesis theoretically (for example sections 3.0 and 4.1) and empirically (for example section 4.8). Consequently, the description and explanation of individuals in terms of their group or category must be misleading. I find support for my observation in the work of Barker (2008, p.207) who explains that contemporary individuals feel: ‘a sense of fragmentary, ambiguous and uncertain nature of living, an awareness of the centrality of contingency, a recognition of cultural difference and acceleration in the pace of living’. Following this understanding we can claim that social and cultural categories play less of a role in the determination of identity than they did. The boundaries between social groups are being eroded. Firat and Venkatesh (1995) supports this view: ‘cultural enclaves no longer run in parallel, but cut across one another in ever changing patterns’ (p.86).

In this contemporary market there is no primary source of meaning and no self-present transparent meaning that can fix the relation between signifiers and signified in consumers’ language. Therefore, the meanings of cultural categories and lifestyles are never structured by a single abstract semiotic system. Thus, as I have shown in this study, the meaning of a particular cultural object such as alcohol for a particular individual in a particular context is produced typically through negotiation between available discourses.
This conception of consumption patterns has powerful implications not only for the understanding of segmentation and targeting but branding strategies as well. Typically, if there is not a one-to-one relationship between consumption objects and their social meanings and uses, and a single product or brand is capable of representing multiple images depending on the context of consumption and use, then it is necessary to investigate consumption from an inter-subjective rather than an object-based perspective (Holt, 1997, p.334).

5.1.2 Implications for marketing in the future

The picture I have drawn is of a marketplace that is a joint cultural production of marketers and consumers (Penaloza, 2001). From this perspective, I have explored the ways in which both marketers and consumers play a part in producing the cultural world. I support Woodward’s (2002) and Holt’s (2002) observation that the new role of marketing is to help consumers increase their ability to choose identities and negotiate their position in society by creative use of their lifestyles and forms of consumption. Consumers look for brands that contribute directly to their identity negotiations. Thus, a branding strategy will not use ‘cultural engineering’ (Holt, 2002) that dictates the meaning of brands but should provide original and relevant cultural materials with which the consumer can identify. Holt (2002, p. 11) says: ‘Brands which inspire, provoke and stimulate, that help them interpret the world that surrounds them will earn kudos and profits’.

The participants in this research have demonstrated very intensive and complex negotiation process with many contradictory cultural circles and show that they need brands and products to be ‘raw materials’ that will help them to achieve the flexibility in this process. Therefore, they want an active role in the determination of the attributes and features of these products and brands. Thus, customer involvement in product design needs to become more of an accepted part of the development and marketing process in many industries. Technological innovation makes it easier to involve customers in the design process. The market already witnesses brands that follow this understanding, for example, Milliken (the textile manufacturer) who invite customers to select their own carpet design from
thousands of colours and patterns through computers. Similarly, customers can use the web to design trainers, T-shirts, furniture, cars, jewellery and watches.

This is where mass customisation comes into play. A manufacturer can equip its customers with a set of tools that enables them to convert their ideas, preferences and tastes into products; this can be any type of product or service. The work of Oon and Khalid (2001) and Wind and Rangaswamy (2001) have found that consumers enjoy the opportunity to take part in product or service design directly via web-based systems and this engagement enhances their satisfaction and value perception. Pepper and Rogers (1997) add that because of the perceived added value and increased satisfaction, customer loyalty also will be increased. I support the claim of Pine and Gilmore (1999) who says that in the contemporary market consumers are transformed from passive recipients of goods and services to proactive assemblers of signs and symbols and this will be an important sea change for marketers and organisations alike.

5.2 Reflection

The researcher has a unique role in qualitative research as her/himself is the main research “instrument” of data collection and analysis. Therefore it is necessary for the researcher to be reflexive (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Russell and Kelly, 2002; Stake, 1995) as this reflection allows them to be aware to potential inhibitions to their understanding (Russell and Kelly, 2002). My own reflection is the focus of this section.

5.2.1 The effect of my life experience on research choices

Some scholars recognise the importance of choosing a suitable research topic (for example: Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Gallos, 1996; Glesne, 1999). These writers explain that it is important to find out ‘which issues, uncertainties, dilemmas, or paradoxes’ (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 14) are most interesting for the researcher. Conducting PhD research is a process that demands high commitment (Wolcott, 1995). This emphasises the need to choose research subject that the researcher
believes is most worthwhile or in Russell and Kelly’s (2002, p.5) words: ‘Good research questions spring from a researcher’s values, passions, and preoccupations’.

I came to live in England 16 years ago from Israel with my wife, a daughter (then five years old) and a son (then almost two years old). We are a Jewish family therefore we have chosen to live in the Jewish area of Manchester and send our children to the local Jewish school. We are not a very religious family and do not observe most of the Jewish religious laws, however, the reason for this choice was mainly the wish to reduce the level of ‘culture shock’ involved in moving to the new British culture. We have assumed that a Jewish community that is well linked to Israel would live similar lifestyle to us in many ways.

Soon after our arrival we have realised that the picture is more complex than we thought initially; the effect of interpersonal differences such as national identity, strength of religious affiliation and professional identity was much stronger than we thought. These issues were intensified after the birth of our ‘English born’ third child when we realised that he will grow up as an English person. This is when I knew that self-identity and ethnicity were the area I would like to explore in my PhD research.

However, I have tried to make sure that my personal reasons for carrying out my study will not have influence on the trustworthiness of a project. I made sure that the design decisions and data analyses will not be based on personal desires without a careful assessment of the empirical implications of these methods and conclusions as this might create holes in their argumentation. While it is neither possible nor necessary to isolate one’s self of personal goals and concerns, it is important to be aware of these concerns, how they are shaping the research, and how best to deal with their consequences (Rossman 1995, Maxwell 1996 ,and Maxwell (2005).

Similarly, Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 14) caution researchers to be wary of the desire to justify their own experience. It is important to be interested in the topic, but a researcher should try to reduce the effect of emotional attachment on her/his attitude to the learning process. This was one of the reasons I chose not to deal with my own community but explore British South-Asian individuals.
As my first degree was in Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology I was well aware of the importance of integrating social, cultural and individual issues into marketing research questions. Furthermore, my research question allowed me to make connections between personal history and my teaching specialty. I am a marketing lecturer in the Business School and my main teaching areas at work are: Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategy and Electronic Commerce. Based on my knowledge in these areas I do believe in the uniqueness of each customer and feel that marketing should develop new strategies to approach individual consumers. With issues such as online consumer behaviour, m-marketing and mass customisation in mind it was clear to me that the role of the marketer should be transformed from one of seeking to segment and target groups of customers to the facilitation of the individual's quest for identity and lifestyle.

In line with my self-experience I do believe that marketing should stop dealing with consumers from ethnic minorities as a mass entity manipulated by its culture. Individual identity is not something given by the group but rather negotiated by the individual for her/himself. As Featherstone (1991, re-published 2004, p.67) describes it:

Rather than un-reflexively adopting a life style, through tradition or habit the new heroes of consumer culture make life style a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearances and bodily dispositions they design together into a life style.

By articulating my thoughts on different occasions (seminars, papers, presentations etc.), I soon identified what I would like to study. I wondered what these unique individuals that negotiate with the meaning of their ‘ethnicity’ (belonging to ethnic minority) can teach me about individualised consumption processes. My literature review indicated that the individualised, de-contextualised and hybrid ethnic identity construction process and the appropriation of brands and marketing narratives had not been studied in a systematic, rigorous manner. I believe my study has rectified the need to develop this area of research further.
5.2.2. **Time management**

Patton (2002, p.35) warns that qualitative research is 'time consuming, intimate, and intense'. My research has taken 6-7 years of my life; during this time my father fell ill with terminal cancer and later died, my mother, now lives on her own in Israel, entered hospital several times, my previous employers pressurised me to stop my PhD studies and piled a lot of pressure on my workload; on a much more positive note I’m a father of three wonderful children who need attention. All these issues competed with my research for time and attention. At times it was very hard to dedicate quiet and productive time to complete my research.

5.3 **Contributions of my research**

The research has offered an insight into the position of consumers within and between discourses that is not readily available in research elsewhere.

5.3.1 **Fuzzy Logic and the pixelation of cultural category**

In this research I make a claim that presenting cultural categories as unified entities is nothing more than a fantasy. My research rejects the claim that cultural categories can serve as a unified source of meaning, and doubts their ability to be a focus of identification or a single dominant system of representation. Instead we should think of these categories as constituting a discursive device, which only on the abstract level represents a unity. Identity is the result of negotiation between deep intra- and inter-personal divisions and differences and different forms of cultural powers.

I suggest that we can treat the abstract understanding of cultural categories as a ‘fuzzy concept’ (Haack, 1996). Fuzzy concepts suggests that the meaning, content, value, or boundaries of a cultural category can vary considerably according to specific context or conditions, instead of being fixed once and for all. This means that the conceptualisation of a cultural category is vague, lacking a fixed, precise meaning, and bares no practical use for marketing practitioners.
In the context of my research I have chosen to focus on ‘ethnicity’ because it is one of the primary dimensions of consumer segmentation. The notion of ethnicity is constructed through an abstraction process, ‘revealing’ the distinguishing features of this category. However, the reverse process, understanding individuals from their ascribed ‘ethnic characteristics’, does not render meaningful results. Individuals will move between, sometimes incommensurate, meanings within a narrative and over time. Additionally, whilst individuals from the same ethnicity might at the superficial conversational level seem to agree, on a deeper exploration of meaning differences will become apparent. This is partly because ‘ethnicity’ is a highly abstracted concept (fuzzy) and meaningful only at that theoretical level. It is also the case because individual life narratives are necessarily works in progress where meanings are deferred; imminent but not present. The outcome of my research suggests that the veracity of the cultural category becomes suspect.

The CCT group contributes to the field of marketing by focusing on “patterns” or positioning the individual within the semiotic context of a given cultural category. Whereas the effect of CCT research is to solidify the ‘cultural’, my research ignores these patterns in favour of the attempt to capture the individual movements between discourses and narratives. To me it is extremely important to zoom-in or “pixelate” the big picture of cultural categories if we want to understand the multiplicity of identities and how individuals move within and between social categories and discourses.

5.3.2 Anti-essentialist marketing

My research made a claim that the essentialist description of market segmentation ignores the reality where everyday consumers’ accounts are full of ontological claims. I have argued that current social and cultural reality creates new types of consumers that are not passive recipients of meanings but proactive negotiators who assemble signs and symbols as part of this process. Therefore, in this thesis I have demonstrated that shared consumer experiences do not necessarily lead to
common meanings or similar decision-making processes regarding consumption. Further, the points of difference around which identities could form are multiple.

Consequently, I could make the claim that segmentation strategies that attempt to constrain consumers to a single, consistent, stable way of behaving are likely to lead to marketing failure. I would like to suggest that marketing’s task is not to make ontological claims about what the ‘real’ or ‘fundamental’ identity of people is and care should be taken when making prediction based on these ontological descriptions. Instead, marketers should simply describe how consumers deal with this reality and, in this way, build cumulative knowledge of consumers’ practices.

While the majority of research in marketing have been focusing on how patterns and social order in markets should be studied and what their causes are, there has been relatively little attention to the development of the argument that my research focuses on, that patterns and social order have been exaggerated or over-emphasised and that individual variations and variability need to be studied more. In describing this development and making claims for its significance, I have used 'anti-essentialist' ideas.

Pelto and Pelto (1975) have noted that since 1884, when Dorsey reported disagreements among Omaha Indians about their own culture, the observations of intra-community heterogeneity reported by many social scientists have, for the most part, been quickly set aside in order to 'get on with the job of describing "social structure" and "typical" cultural patterning' (Pelto and Pelto, 1975, p. 1). My contribution here is the attempt to go beyond acknowledging the existence of variations between types of groups of consumers. I recommend that the variations rather than the patterns are the main focus of marketing studies.

The anti-essentialist view of marketing I present here sees variations as, ironically, a 'fundamental reality' (Gould, 1982, p.12) and do not perceive lack of patterns and order as an accident in how norms work. I reject the essentialist notion that whatever is shared or universal (for example, 'whiteness', ‘femininity’) has a reality of its own and is more deserve the attention of scholars than are single things, including the individual consumer, or collection of single things.
Even if my research made use of categories such as 'ethnicity' and 'religion', or 'race', it is not with a view to discovering norms for them or to find out what they 'really are' but rather to explore and explain variations in people’s lives and their experiences. The focus of my research is based on the study of individual people and their social reality.

5.3.3 Developing the theory of Laclau

The thesis has offered a valuable indication of the relevance of Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) theory of political identity for understanding consumers’ identity construction. I make a claim that Laclau and Mouffe’s stress on the ontological dimension of identity, i.e. on the analysis of its ‘political logic’ rather than its ‘content’ can offer very powerful tool for understanding the place of marketing in identity formation process. In order to answer questions of identity, social position and groupings (some of the main issues in segmentation) one has to consider the way in which ‘self’ and ‘society’ are understood and given meaning in relation to the particular issues at stake. If we want to understand cultural identity we need to take into account the fact that ‘Britishness’, ‘South Asianness’, ‘religion’, or any other type of group identity are not essential categories, but discursive constructions and the results of hegemonic practices of articulation.

This view differs radically from the dominant view in marketing that tends to assume that cultural meanings are the primary determiners or shapers of experience and self. Some marketing writers take a more constructionist approach and claim that people create meaning by drawing on available webs of cultural meanings, but even these theorists seem to assume that whatever meanings are invented or created in this way come entirely from a cultural corpus or stock.

In this kind of theoretical scheme individuals were important only as structures in themselves, or as related to structure in some identifiable way. For example, Sirgy (1982) subordinates individuality to the uniformity that is supposedly present in the ways in which human cognition is structured. This holistic approach stresses the need for society to impose itself over individuals and to imprint itself on their consciousness. Of course this style of cultural analysis was not limited to accounts of
individual consumers, but extended to the interpretation of social phenomena generally. It regards symbols as standing for particular referents that can be objectively identified rather than just being a means for conveying the raw materials for individual interpretive work.

The explanation I present for segmentation is based on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985, p.111) conception of ‘The Field of Discursivity’ - this is a field in which every discursive formation partakes and in which none of these discourses can fully master the others. The field of discursivity is characterised by the multitude of meanings that every object/sign/element can take. This field conditions every object as discursively constituted, while at the same time it prevents every attempt to fix their meaning, since they can always be put in new relational constellations, which would assign them new meanings.

There are numerous discourses in the market, representing given particularities, which claim their rights to construe the social, and the consumer needs to be considered within that network of determination. However, Laclau and Mouffe refuse to see the subject as merely a locus, or position within the discourse. They maintain instead that the subject is situated in between discursive practices; none of them is capable of identifying the subject “totally”. Therefore, the consumer appears as an empty space between articulations. The individual locates her/himself temporarily within a discourse and uses the discursive resources to identify him/herself, but none of these resources is sufficient for the purpose and therefore soon the individual moves to the next discourse.

If this view is correct, marketing will increasingly be required to assist the individual to create their subjectivities through the work of evoking, improvising, appropriating and refusing participation in practices and discourses. Consumers will create their life styles and make choices as part of this creative process of negotiation. Brands will need to be both inspiring and relevant to the individual self, and wide and flexible enough to enable consumers to incorporate them within their own self-narratives.
5.3.4 Critique of Segmentation concept

Segmentation has been singled out in this thesis because it is a cornerstone of marketing concept. My claim in this research is that traditional conceptions of segmentation strategy may not be as meaningful or satisfactory as once thought, marketers may need to develop different conceptions and approaches to segmentation and positioning if they wish to achieve marketing success.

The main focus of my thesis is Smith’s view (1956, p.4) of the heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogeneous markets, where variation in the demands of individual consumers are ‘minimised or brought into line by means of the effective use of appealing product claims designed to make a satisfactory volume of demand convergence upon the product line being promoted’ (p.4). Thus marketers could expect the end result of segmentation to be greater marketing success than one could achieve by treating all customers as a single undifferentiated mass. The findings of this research put the segmentation concept in doubt because there was no evidence for the primary source of meaning and no self-present transparent meanings that fixed the relation between signifiers and signified in the participants’ language.

In light of this view we can understand the statement of ‘The Marketer’- (22 August, 2012) that claims: ‘Savvy brands are adopting personalised marketing campaigns that appeal to their target customers’. I would like to support those marketing scholars (for example, Gilmore and Pine, 2000) who claim that we are witnessing an evolution of business competition from mass markets to ‘markets of one’ – in other words, from creating standardized value through mass production to creating customer-unique value through mass customisation, personalisation and individualisation methods.
5.3.5 Methodological contributions

Until recently there has been limited use of methods adapted to suit anti-essentialist research and I believe that my study has illustrated the benefits of developing a sensitive research methodology that suits the individuals involved in the research and gives them a more active role in the research process. The benefits of this research approach would be equally applicable to many other areas of marketing research.

I argue that marketing writing has for a long time relied on over-generalised and under-researched categories such as ‘women’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘social economic class’. While accepting that these analytic categories were important and useful for market research, I feel the ways they were used failed to unpack the assumptions and generalisations embedded within them. Similarly, using categories in monolithic terms without fully exploring the implications of the political, ethical, ontological and epistemological differences that existed within these categories has lead to oversimplification and, potentially, marketing failure. Further work is required to develop new methods, methodologies and epistemologies to establish wider anti-essentialist parameters for new discussions within marketing scholarship.

My research strategy promotes new forms of writing that problematize the relationships among writer, reader, and subject. I take inspiration from the work of ‘new ethnography’ (Clifford, 1986) that allows the ‘native informant’ to read and contest the ethnographer’s characterisations of her/his own culture. The fundamental goal of this approach is to apprehend ‘others’ in such a way as not to deny or diffuse the individual claim to ‘subjecthood’. My research strategy is informed by the notion of culture as a collective and historically contingent construct. This strategy claims to be sensitive to cultural differences and within cultures to the multiplicity of individual experiences.

To be able to share the authority of interpretation between the participant and myself, I adopted a participatory research approach that attempts to change traditional power relations and ensure that research is owned and controlled by
research participants as well as researchers. As Cornwell and Jewkes describe it: ‘The key difference between participatory and conventional methodologies lies in the location of power in the research process’ (1995, p.166). My research invites the participants to take part in the co-creation of knowledge about them. This is similar to the concept of 'partnership research', offered by Lloyd et al. (1996), who recognise similar principles namely, non-hierarchical research relationships.

I hope that my research can encourage further development of anti-essentialist methodologies that are based on valorising multivocality; relinquishing the expert position in relation to the participants (especially the sole power to interpret), using non-ethnographic and non-projective approaches in consumer research, creating awareness of the temporality of research findings, and searching for new ways to understand consumers as continuously negotiating ways to construct their lives.

5.4 Further research

There are inevitably limitations to the research which have an impact on the conclusions drawn. The participants involved in the research were all from a similar ethnic background, age and socio-economic class. Whilst the research provides in-depth information regarding the lives of these individuals it is unclear how applicable the results are to a wider population. Further research to exploring the experiences of consumers from different life circumstances would be both interesting and useful.

My research looks at participants at a very specific time period of their lives. It may be beneficial to undertake a longer-term tracking study with individuals of this age as they get older and some establish families of their own. Further research could examine resources for identity construction, how certain influences may have shifted, whether individuals still feel they are afforded such flexibility in negotiating discourses and how they do this as they move through different stages of life.

It has been evident during the research that ethnicity and religious identity are not necessarily incompatible with globalised consumer identity. It would be useful to undertake more in-depth work with consumers from other cultural contexts to
understand more fully how consumption fits into their identity. Further research may consider examining experiences of individuals from different cultures. It would also be useful to understand in greater detail how members of the majority ‘ethnicity’ in society construct identities and may be experiencing other types of exclusion with other signifiers at stake (for example ‘gender’).

Some consumers have fewer opportunities to take part in market activities although some would welcome this opportunity. It would be useful therefore, to understand how individuals who have been excluded from market opportunities on the basis of their disability, or because they are marginalised in some way negotiate different discourses and thereby identify how marketing can help these individuals participate in suitable opportunities. Such research would assist with understanding the complexities of identity construction for wider circles of consumers.

5.5 Concluding summary

This research was developed with the intention of examining individuals' life experiences in relationship to the current market, in the context of evaluating segmentation strategy. Following this aim it has been possible to explore British South Asian participants’ identity construction and the place of marketing in this process. During the course of the research, these initial aims have provided the central focus but the process of engaging and working closely with a small group of participants revealed further dimensions of knowledge that had not been initially considered. The methodological approach became a more prominent component than initially planned, and the research has been able to contribute to a growing literature that sees research participants as actively involved in the management of the research process. This approach has also enabled a detailed examination of participants' lives beyond their experiences of ethnicity. Broadening the scope of the research revealed further potential for work of this type within marketing studies. Much is to be gained by marketing researchers recognising the individuality of their participants; diversifying their methodological approaches to do so; and through this shift in vision extending the agenda of marketing and consumer behaviour research. Doing so may encourage us to re-think and re-evaluate current marketing strategies and practices.
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Appendix 1

Dear (participant)

Thank you for indicating that you might be able to help with my research.

To remind you, I’m looking into the relationships between self-identity and consumption of second and third generation of British Born South Asian individuals. In this research you will need to ‘map’ the circles of influences on your self-identity and its relationship with your consumption behaviour by creating self-identity collage and shopping experience collage (instructions for the preparations of these collages will follow this letter) and then we will analyse this ‘maps’ together in a face-to-face conversation.

This research aims to give you, as the participant, an increased voice and authority in interpreting and representing your world. Therefore, you will have the opportunity to act as a co-researcher and analyse and comment on the material you will produce together with me.

Please be reassured that I’m NOT especially interested in your ethnicity or religious background -just some idea of how important are particular cultural categories to you, and how this might affect your consumption behaviour. Please note that there will be no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to my questions: I really want to hear what YOU have to say on the subject based on YOUR experiences and views.

I would welcome the chance to record a discussion with you at a time and location convenient to you. This might take about 2-3 hours, or even more. I can offer to buy lunch in return for your time!

To further reassure you, anything I record from our discussion will of course be treated as STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. Any names of individuals used in my final write-up would be thoroughly disguised. In addition, I will present you with a full transcript of what you said, in order for you to have the chance to correct any mistakes I may have made, or to edit any details that you subsequently feel to be too sensitive.

I hope all this sounds fine. If you are comfortable with contributing to my study, then please give me a call and we can fix up a chat and I will send you detailed instructions for the preparation of the self-identity and shopping experience collages and the interview. Thank you very much!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ofer Dekel
Appendix 2- Sample of Consent Form

Participant Name:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSENT FORM Postmodern Culture And The Ethnic Consumer A Deconstruction Of Self-Identity Of Ethnic Consumers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Name of Researcher and contact details:
Ofer Dekel
15 Ashness Close Nottingham NG2 6QW
o.dekel@ymail.com
07980166017

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated __________ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team.

4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

| __________________________ | __________________ | __________________ |
| Name of Participant | Date | Signature |

| __________________________ | __________________ | __________________ |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |
Appendix 3 - Research brief for Self-identity collage

Theoretical Background

Thank you very much for your decision to join this research project and support it with your work. This research will try to study the relationships between self-identity and consumption of British Born South Asian individuals.

Visual things and qualities that appeal to the sense of sight, and visual representation are important elements of consumer culture. In contemporary western society, people are exposed to hundreds of culturally coded images every day. They have breakfast watching morning TV broadcast and then go through their day facing a virtually endless stream of images: on-street ads, neon light signs, in store advertising displays, product packages, music videos and so on. The cultural meanings and narratives that these images evoke provide consumer not only with norms, standards, ideals and role models but also cultural knowledge, a visual vocabulary and interpretive resources that help them to make sense of their lives. Visual imagery is thus an important part of the system of representation in and through which social reality is constructed.

People communicate and achieve social identity partly by using visual symbols and images in various forms. They construct their social and professional identities through particular styles of dress, some wearing dark business suits others colourful ethnic outfits. They perform their gender identity by managing their appearance with the help of make up and gender appropriate accessories-guided by a powerful cultural imagery of femininity and masculinity. They even work out at the gym and engage in complex dietary regimes to sculpt their bodies into forms that better corresponds to certain culturally desirable images of 'male' or 'female'. The visible forms, colours and textures of material objects and artifacts have properties and function as visual signs. Marketers encode products with particular design features, visual cues that are hoped to evoke specific association and to give products a particular character, that is, to create a brand image.

In this research we focus on the ways in which the visual as the reflection of culture and as something that contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of culture can be studied. We will take visuality as something that produce specific views of the social world and which is also used by people to construct particular accounts of that social world.

Methods that are based on collaborative and reflexive use of visual representation aim to give the study participant and increased voice and authority in interpreting and representing the phenomena under study. Some of the methods rely on the participants themselves to produce the visual materials that constitute the data of the study. In this research you will have the opportunity to take part in such research.
Personal visual narratives and collage- explanation about the research method

Collage technique refers to a method in which participants need to represent a topic visually by composing and gluing together a 'collage' (collection or clutter) of images, drawings and texts on a piece of cardboard or paper. In this research you will need to 'map' the circles of influences on your self-identity and its relationship with consumption. You will create visual account of your self-identity and the images of visual inspirations that influence your consumer behaviour.

The research process

First stage

You will need to make two collages. For the preparation of these collages you should use:

- A1 sized poster paper - for each collage
- Photos- Use photographs from your family album (scan the photo, don't cut the original photo from the album) or take a camera or mobile phone with a camera with you for the preparation of shopping experience collages
- Images clipped out of magazines or the internet
- Drawings and markers for writing the texts.

I will cover the cost of the stationary or scanning work if required.

First collage- self-identity

- Put a photo of yourself in the middle (try to find a photo that you perceive as the best representation of yourself) and than around it put photos, images, and materials that include the following:

  ✓ Positive and negative characters (at least one positive and one negative) in your life. Beyond being merely being a role model, a positive figure is someone who has inspired you, occupied your thoughts, and guided your actions. Negative figure or disliked figures will be figures that you associate strong negative thought or feelings. The figures must come from different dimensions of your experience: (1) Individuals you know personally, and (2) Public figures whom you have never met (e.g. celebrity, politician, sport star), or a fictional character from a story or other product of imagination.

  ✓ Objects in the world- your most important material possessions, your favourite brands that you feel represent you more than the others. Symbolic objects that are dear to you, place/s in the world, clothing items, and work of art or imagination.
- Photos of life events - photos from your childhood (peak experiences and/or nadir experiences), adolescence (peak experiences and/or nadir experiences) and Adulthood (peak experiences and/or nadir experiences).

Second collage - shopping experience collage

Go to any shopping experience of your choice with a camera and notepad and record any image that comes up to your mind or inspire you while you are in the shopping experience.

Next, when you will come back home you should make a collage with photo of the item you bought in the middle and around it visual description of the images that came to your mind while you were in the shopping experience.

Second stage

We will meet for interview (should take around 2-3 hours). Before the interview please think on the following questions:

Look at the figures you have chosen and think why they are important to you try to remember a short story that involve them.

For one of the public figures, imagine it was possible right now to have a conversation. What would you choose to talk about? If you could invite her/him to join you to one of your life style activities what would you choose? Would you invite any of the others in your personal life to join you and public figure and if yes who would you invite and why.

Look at the figures that influence your life (private and public). How they influence your consumer behaviour? Are there any differences or contradictions in their influences?

Think about the objects in your self-identity collage. Why they are important, are they equally important in different situations and around different circles of people in your private life?

After you have analysed your self-identity collage look at the two shopping experiences collages and try to find out any links and reflections between your self-identity and the visual inspirations you had.

Write notes on the notebook you have received from me and bring it with you to the interview

Please be ready to come twice for the interview. This is because the discussion might take long time and we will need to take a break and continue in another time.
Third stage

After categorising the transcripts of our interview we will meet for the last meeting. In this meeting I will present you the categories I have identified in the transcript of your interview and would like you to think about these categories see if you are happy with this categorisation and if you are happy try to think what title would you give to each category.
Appendix 3 Examples of Self-identity collages
Appendix 4 Examples of Shopping Experience Collage