MAKING SENSE OF 'US AND THEM'

an exploration of counter hegemonic boundary-making work amongst Pakistani Muslims in Birmingham

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The photograph on the cover shows Birmingham Central Mosque. Photograph taken by author.

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1. Introduction

"There used to be a lot of patriotism, a lot of people used to be very proud of the monarchy, of our countryside. But recently, being British has a lot of political edges. It doesn't make me feel as British as I used to. I feel like I'm a side group at the moment and that I don't have the right to be British. I still try to be as I am, if that makes sense."[1]

In the wake of 9/11 and more importantly, after two terrorist attacks on British soil carried out by British citizens, the 7/7 London bombings and the Lee Rigbee murder, Muslims in Britain have come under particular scrutiny: the attacks sparked debates about their integration and their loyalty to Britain was put to question (Mandaville 2009: 492). The government's answer to these threats which is the controversial counter terrorism strategy called 'Prevent', is highly criticized for its detrimental effect on open debate, free speech, political dissent, its mistrust of Muslims, and its promotion of an 'us-them' divide.[2] 'Prevent' has strengthened the perception amongst Muslims that they are being targeted because of their faith and treated as a 'suspect community' (Awan 2012: 1164).[3] In this climate, TellMAMA, the national reporting mechanism for Islamophobic hate crime, reported a steady rise in levels of anti-Muslim hatred (Feldman & Litter 2014).[4] Furthermore, the 'Britain Uncovered social attitudes survey' found that seventy-nine percent of Britons believe that British Muslims should make a special effort to state their loyalty to Britain and sixty-five percent of Britons think Islamophobia is common in Britain. Moreover, nearly half of Britons believe race relations have worsened of the past five years.[5] British Muslims of Pakistani heritage, Britain's largest and most stigmatized Muslim community, are at the intersection of race and religion based markers of difference. Hence they are subject to both increased skin color racism and rising Islamophobia. Research has shown that the majority of Pakistani Muslims strongly and proudly identifies with being British (Maxwell 2006, Phillips 2006,

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[1] Author's interview with Maha, twenty-nine years old. Interview conducted on 13 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[2] Open Letter on The Independent website, published online on 10 July 2015, consulted by author on 28 July 2015.
[3] Awan defines a 'suspect community' as a sub-group of the population that is perceived by the state as problematic. As a result, individuals are targeted by state policies – in particular policing – simply because they are identified as members of that sub-group (Awan 2012: 1166). According to Awan, a combination of media portrayals of Muslims as 'Islamist extremists' and 'Jihadists', and discriminatory counterterrorism legislation and hard-line policing have contributed to the categorization of Muslims as 'suspects' (2012: 1167).
[4] See also Hooper (2014) 'UK report: Anti-Muslim hate crime rising', on the AlJazeera website, published online on 6 July 2014, consulted by author on 23 November 2014.
[5] Mann (2015) 'Britain Uncovered survey results: the attitudes and beliefs of Britons in 2015', on the Guardian website, published online on 19 April 2015, consulted by author on 28 July 2015.

Vadher & Barrett 2009, Thomas & Sanderson 2011). However, as the quote at the start of this chapter indicates, their identification with Britishness is not met with acceptance by wider society. The key barrier to Muslims' categorization as British is not self-segregation by Muslims, but *"the 'policing' of the boundary of Britishness by the white British majority"* (Vadher & Barrett 2009: 445). Positioning the empirical complication within the theoretical framework of ethnic boundary-making, this study aims to explore the different ways in which British born Pakistani Muslims seek acceptance into the British national community of belonging. I do not focus on British Muslims' feelings of loyalty, nor will I explore the causes or mechanisms behind the Islamophobic climate which gives rise to their exclusion from British national identity. Instead, I will try to uncover and understand the processes involved in their quest for belonging, by answering the following question:

How do British born Muslims of Pakistani heritage strategically negotiate boundaries of British national identity under rising Islamophobia, in Birmingham, since 7/7?

I have unpacked the main question into two components: First, in order to understand why these boundaries are negotiated and contested, I needed to explore how British born Muslims of Pakistani heritage experience categorizations by outsiders. Second, an understanding of responses to these categorizations requires an examination of the range of boundary-making strategies employed by my informants in order to be accepted as British.

Key Concepts

This study is built upon the ethnic boundary-making model as developed by Wimmer (2008). Wimmer conceptualizes boundary-making work – to draw, maintain and contest the line between 'us' and 'them' – as a negotiation process. In his model, boundary-making strategies are both informed by and constitutive of a social field (2008a: 973). *Ontologically, this study thus takes on a structurationist stance.* I particularly focus on the formation of counterdiscourses: boundary-making practices that challenge hegemonic boundaries. By looking at the boundary-work of British born Pakistani Muslims in an anti-Muslim climate, I aim to better understand the processes involved in the formation of counterdiscourses. Chapter two discusses all sensitizing concepts and situates them within their wider academic debate. Here I will only introduce the contextual concept of Islamophobia and discuss its position within Wimmer's theoretical framework.

Islamophobia was defined in a 1997 Runnymede Trust report as the unfounded hostility towards Islam, resulting in *"unfair discrimination against Muslims and the exclusion of Muslims*

from mainstream political and social affairs." (1997: 4) Figure 1. summarizes the eight closed views of Islam identified by the report as underlying Islamophobia, giving rise to four Islamophobic practices: prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and violence (1997: 11).

Figure 1. Closed views of Islam

> Islam is seen as
> 1. ... a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities
> 2. ... separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them and (c) not influencing them
> 3. ... inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist
> 4. ... violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in a 'clash of civilizations'
> 5. ... a political ideology, used for political or military advantage
>
> 6. Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' are rejected out of hand
> 7. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society
> 8. Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'
>
> (Runnymede Trust 1997: 4)

Nowadays, the Runnymede Report definition is widely criticized. Allen (2010) argues for example that the last three views are not so much views as they are insights into the situation at that time (2007: 126). However, precisely these three 'views' are useful when considering Allen's definition of Islamophobia as an ideology that

> *"sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam … subsequently pertaining, influencing and impacting upon social action, interaction, response and so on, shaping and determining understanding, perceptions and attitudes in the social consensus … that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other."* (2010: 190)

According to Allen this ideology is not limited to explicit or direct relationships of domination, but is instead predominantly found in the less explicit everyday relationships of power (2010: 190). It is about the (subtle) ways in which Muslims and Islam are thought, spoken and written about (2010: 195). This is what Allen refers to as the 'white noise' of Islamophobia: the implicit discourse that assumes Islam and Muslims as a problem.

The relationship between the ideology of Islamophobia and identification processes of Muslims is clarified through Sayyid's (2014) conceptualization of Islamophobia as the undermining of a distinct Muslim identity:

> *"Islamophobia needs to be understood as an undermining of the ability of Muslims as Muslims, to project themselves into the future."* (Sayyid 2014: 14)

According to Sayyid state policies which place an extra burden on the Muslim population such as the earlier mentioned Prevent strategy are key to this undermining, because they restrict expressions of Muslimness (Sayyid 2014: 16).

Drawing upon these three definitions, I conceptualize Islamophobia in its broadest sense: the problematization of Muslims' categorization as British and subsequent denial of Muslims as part of the British community of belonging. Hence, I treat Islamophobia as a factor in the social field which limits the maneuver room for British born Pakistani Muslims to strategically negotiate their belonging to British national identity.

Relevance and Objectives

Wimmer's model aims to foster the conversation between the segregated fields of macro sociological, comparative historical approaches to ethnicity, race, and nationalism, and the micro sociological and ethnographic traditions (Wimmer 2008a: 1011). However, the majority of the case-studies he presents are large, predominantly quantitative, comparative studies. This study adds a non-comparative, qualitative exploration of boundary-making work at the individual level. Such a small scale, in-depth exploration of boundary-making processes adds insights in how Wimmer's theory translates into people's everyday life experiences.

Furthermore, a rich understanding of this particular case may inform a deeper theoretical understanding of counterhegemonic boundary-making work by (ethnic) minorities in a national majority/ minorities scenario. By focussing on the formation of counterdiscourses, this study adds an insight into the dialectic relationship between boundary-making actors and the social field in which they operate. An analysis of boundary-making work set against hegemonic boundary-making processes, such as the 'us-them' divide which excludes Muslims from belonging to British national identity, enables a critical evaluation of the structurationist assumptions underlying Wimmer's model.

Lastly, and of high societal importance, this study contributes to knowledge on the interpersonal and emotional effects of Islamophobia. Academic work on Islamophobia has grown in numbers and attention in recent years, but it tends to focus on historical 'world system's' analyses, media or state discourse analyses, and online hate crime (for example: Alan 2010, Awan 2013, Awan 2014a, Sayyid 2014). TellMAMA signals a lack of understanding of the effects of Islamophobia on people's experiences and perceptions.[6] This study serves as a first step towards an understanding of the long term effects of a sphere of Islamophobia on identity politics.

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[6] Author's interview with Bharath, researcher at TellMAMA. Interview conducted on 20 February 2015 in London.

Through this study I thus aim to give voice to those who experience Islamophobia as a lived reality.

Methodology

I developed a research design based on a 'case-study method'. Instead of looking at a fixed set of variables across many cases to explain their variations and causality, I studied one case to discover the key variables, associated values and significant relationships between them, that best describe my case (Curtis & Curtis 2011: 7). I aim to understand the actions of my informants, rather than to explain them. *Epistemologically, this study thus takes on an interpretative stance.*

A case-study method is particularly appropriate for research taking place in a real-life context in which the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and its context are not clearly evident (Yin 2003: 13). Case-study research therefore tends to be in-depth, seeking richness and completeness (Curtis & Curtis 2011: 8). The case central to this study are the boundary-making practices of British born Pakistani Muslims in Birmingham, in a climate of Islamophobia which excludes them from belonging to British national identity. In order to gain a rich understanding of these boundary-making processes, I conducted three months of fieldwork research in Birmingham, between February and May 2015.

The fieldwork period consisted of three interrelated steps, in which an ongoing conversation took place between the collected data and my analytical frames. First, I conducted literature research on ethnic boundary-making work, which resulted in a dual focus on outside categorizations and on the boundary-making practices they evoke. In addition, academic experts on Islamophobia were consulted to gain insights in its influence on the social field. As a second step, I developed a topic guide based on preliminary conversations with informants and theoretical propositions deducted from Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making model.[7] In line with my epistemological standpoint, this study is designed to understand the experiences and perceptions of my informants from within. Therefore I collected their stories through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and through observations during Islamophobia-awareness events. In the third and final step Wimmer's taxonomy of boundary-making strategies served as an entrance point for the analysis of the counterdiscourses I encountered in the stories of my informants.[8]

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[7] See appendix A for the topic guide. (Appendixes are left out of the digital version)
[8] See appendix B for the boundary-making strategies continuum which I used to structure the analysis of my data.

Sample

The sample of this study consists of fourteen British born Muslims of Pakistani heritage who are involved in anti-Islamophobia work, and three representatives of Muslim community organizations.[9] I have chosen to focus on anti-Islamophobia activists because of their ability to reflect on boundary-making work in relation to national identity and the perceived and experienced influence of an Islamophobic climate, since this is an issue they are consciously involved in. Moreover, a focus on anti-Islamophobia work aids the analysis of counterdiscourses, since it is a site where hegemonic boundaries are opposed and their narratives are challenged. All activists were between eighteen and thirty years old, highly educated and politically engaged. I interviewed four men and ten women. Since I wanted to hear specifically from people active in anti-Islamophobia work, I largely had to rely on snowball sampling. Initial contacts were established through the Pakistani and Islamic societies at the University of Birmingham, and by visiting local lectures on Islamophobia.

According to Wimmer, the character of ethnic boundaries is ultimately derived from the dynamics of representational power in the social field (2008a: 986). Muslim community organizations play a mediating and facilitating role in conversations with the establishment. Their boundary-making work is therefore extra influential in negotiations over the boundaries of national identity. For this reason, the other part of my sample consists of local community organization representatives. These informants were purposefully sampled: I spoke to the Birmingham representative of the Islamic Society of Britain, of the Muslim Association of Britain, and of MEND Muslims Engagement and Development. Open interviews were chosen in order to give them freedom to discuss the topics they thought were of interest. This way I gained an insight in their priorities and perceptions on national identity and Islamophobia, without me posing specific, uniformly constructed questions about these topics.

Confidentiality and the Use of Quotes

With the exception of the community organization representatives who were speaking both as individuals as well as spokespersons of their organizations, all my informants wished to remain anonymous. I have honored their request by referring to my informants with pennames. Throughout this study I use quotes to illustrate my findings. The quotes presented in this study represent therefore not just individual stories, but are illustrative of broader patterns in my data. Next to changing the names of the persons quoted, I have made small adjustments to the quotes in order to ensure readability. Yet, I maintained both the personal character and the meaning of all quotes used.

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[9] See appendix C for an overview of all informants and their key characteristics.

Limitations

The first part of this study seeks to understand how boundary-making actors perceive and experience the influence of the social field on their boundary-making work. However, as a consequence of this focus on informants' views, I have not collected first hand data on the constraining and enabling workings of the social field. My analysis of the relationship between counterdiscourses and hegemonic boundary-making is therefore limited to what I learned about this relationship through my informants' stories.

Furthermore, Wimmer advises against snowball sampling in the form of 'asking Pakistanis to name other Pakistanis' because it limits your sample to individuals who are recognized by others as co-ethnics (2007: 28). This may lead me to fall in the 'Herderian trap', finding ethnic divisions to be the most prevalent and relevant social cleavages where in fact they are not. According to Wimmer, individuals from a particular country of origin can be taken as the unit of observation, provided that *"the study has to ask, rather than take for granted, whether there is indeed community organization, ethnic closure in networking practices, a shared outlook on the host society etc."* (2007: 28) Even though sampled partially on ethnic criteria, this study focuses on the variety of impacts experienced and actions taken within that sample. In order to avoid ontological collectivism, I have tried to stay close to informants' self-identifications and self-descriptions.

Finally, the choice for a case-study method and related inductive approach bears consequences for the generalizability of the study findings. In contrast to 'many cases' studies such as often found in quantitative research, studies based on a single case cannot be generalized to the wider research population through a representative sample. Instead of aiming for generalizations to populations, research based on the case-study method aims to expand and generalize theories (Yin 2003: 10). Thus, the aim of this study is not to grasp how the wider population of British born Pakistani Muslims responds to a sphere of Islamophobia, but to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Islamophobia on the formation of counterdiscourses in a national majority/ minorities scenario.

The Case

Birmingham has the second largest Pakistani community in the United Kingdom after London, and is considered to be the prime location for British Pakistanis.[10] The city is known for its super diverse and multicultural identity, yet it does not have the cosmopolitan feel of London. Unfortunately, it has a rich history with Islamophobic incidents. For example, Muslim

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[10] Office for National Statistics (2011) 'Neighborhood Statistics', last updated on 18 May 2011, consulted by author on 30 July 2015.

communities were intensively spied upon in Project Champion,[11] and Muhammed Saleem, an elderly local, was murdered on his way home from a mosque by a man who also conspired to bomb three mosques in the greater Birmingham area.[12] Furthermore, in the spring of 2014 a hoax letter claiming hard line Islamists were plotting to take over schools in predominantly Muslim areas of Birmingham caused national controversy, which became known as the Trojan Horse affair. A report by the City Council found there was no evidence of a conspiracy to promote an anti-British agenda, violent extremism or radicalization (Awan 2014b: 38). However, the suggestion that children were indoctrinated by extremists within 'un-British' schools stuck, confirming and reinforcing the 'white noise' of British Muslims as problematic and 'British' and Islamic values as incompatible. As a final example, and of particular significance to my informants, Islamophobic graffiti was found on the campus of the University of Birmingham on three different occasions in the months leading up to my fieldwork. Over one hundred and fifty students protested against the graffiti spree, asserting they no longer felt safe on campus.[13] Birmingham thus serves as an excellent site for the study of boundary-making work related to national identity in a climate of Islamophobia.

Chapter Outline

The next chapter elaborates further on the key concepts and places the research puzzle in its broader academic context. Here I will discuss all the analytical frames that guided my data collection and analysis. This is followed by two empirical chapters in which I will present my findings. The third chapter explores how my informants experience and perceive categorizations by outsiders and discusses the elements they feel restrict them in their belonging to British national identity. In the fourth chapter I then discuss the main boundary-making strategies I encountered in response to this outside categorization. I will also examine their power as counterdiscourses in challenging hegemonic boundaries. In the final chapter I will answer the main question, reflect upon the significance of my findings for the analytical concepts that initially guided this study, and propose avenues for further research.

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[11] As part of police measures to increase safety, over 200 camera's were installed in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods. These turned out to be funded out of the counter terrorism budget and used to monitor suspicious behavior. See also: Authi (2011) 'Birmingham's Project Champion spy cameras are taken down', on the Birmingham Post website, published online on 10 May 2011, consulted by author on 27 July 2015.
[12] BBC News (2013) 'Mohammed Saleem stabbing: Man admits murder and mosque blasts', on the BBC website, published online on 21 October 2013, consulted by author on 27 July 2015.
[13] Authi (2010) 'Universtiy of Birmingham racist graffiti attack: THIRD incident hits campus' on the Birmingham Mail website, published online on 17 March 2015, consulted by author on 27 July 2015.

2. The Debate: Ethnic Boundary-Making as a Negotiation Process

In this chapter I will situate the key concepts in their academic context and discuss the analytical frames which I have used to make sense of my empirical complication. The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter also serves as the entrance point for my analysis.

A relational perspective on ethnic categorizations

I position my study within the relational, constructivist approach to ethnic group formation. This approach is rooted in a Bartherian conceptualization of ethnicity as a social construct. According to Barth (1998), ethnic groups are not necessarily characterized by a shared culture, nor linked to a shared territory. He argues for a focus on the social boundaries that define a group, *"not the cultural stuff it encloses."* (1998: 15). He furthermore states that boundaries are not about once and for all recruitment, but boundary maintenance consists of continual expression and validation (ibid: 15). In this view, ethnic identification can be thought of as a reciprocal process.

This approach to ethnic identification is shared by Jenkins (2008) who proposes to distinguish between an ethnic group and an ethnic category. He defines an ethnic group as the product of collective internal definition, based on self-identification and a shared sense of belonging. Ethnic categories, however, may be entirely imposed by powerful outsiders and are associated with high degrees of discrimination and exclusion (Jenkins 2008: 105). According to Jenkins, group identification is interlinked with categorization. This does not mean that categorization follows naturally from internal group identification: there may be situations in which prior categorization leads to group identification (ibid: 110). There may also be situations in which categorization is more significant for the categorizer than for the categorized: *"Our categories don't have to be consequentially 'real' to the people whom they refer in order to have consequences for us."* (ibid: 108) The creation of a possible group identity through categorization does not necessarily and inevitably create an actual one (ibid: 110).

Since this study is concerned with the boundaries of national identity, one might argue whether or not a person belongs is decided through their categorization by the state as either a citizen or a foreigner. However, I understand the nation as a cultural community of belonging, which does not necessarily overlap with the political community of citizenship. While members of a single nation-state share the same citizenship, they may not all be part of the same national identity. I follow Guibernau (2007) in his definition of national identity as the collective sentiment of belonging to the nation (2007: 7). In a national majority/ ethnic minorities scenario such as the case central to this study, the term 'ethnic minority' is understood as a group disadvantaged in

terms of power and resources, often subjected to discrimination and racism because their cultures and customs are considered to be inferior (ibid: 59, 149). In contrast, the majority group has political, economic and ideological power, assuming its culture to be the 'natural' culture in society (ibid: 149). According to Guibernau, the state plays an important role in how these prejudices play out through the policies it adopts to either constrain or enable racial disadvantage (ibid: 149). It is therefore important to not only take into account the ways in which ethnic minorities identify themselves, but simultaneously focus on how they are categorized as 'others' by (powerful) outsiders (ibid: 59). In line with this perspective, the study focuses both on how hegemonic categorizations are experienced, as well as on the identitarian responses they provoke.

Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making model

The main analytical frame of this study consists of the ethnic boundary-making model by Wimmer (2008a, 2008b).[14] To explain the variety and dynamics of ethnic boundaries, he looks at identification as a negotiation process between different actors. Each negotiation is situated in a social field whose characteristics shape the boundary-making strategies of the actors in negotiation (2008a: 973). In this perspective, ethnic boundaries are the outcome of classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors who are enabled and constrained by a social field. They are not static nor obvious: the degree of closure and clarity varies between societies, social situations and institutional contexts (ibid: 976). Wimmer's model takes into account the macro level of the nation-state, as well as the micro processes of everyday boundary contestation, looking at how the interplay of various strategies feeds back into the macro structures that characterize the social field (ibid: 1010). The usage of strategies in negotiations over a boundary is coined by Wimmer as boundary-making work, which he defines as

> *"different ways in which individual and collective actors can relate to an existing, established mode of classification and closure, and how they can attempt to reinforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society."* (2013: 44)

Wimmer defines a social boundary as the overlap of a scheme of differentiation with a corresponding mode of acting upon these differences (2008a: 975). It displays both a categorical dimension, consisting of acts of social classification and collective representation; and a social or behavioral dimension, consisting of everyday networks of relationships and individual acts of connecting or distancing (ibid: 987).

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[14] The core of his theory was laid out in a series of articles in 2008. These are collected and further elaborated upon in: Wimmer, A. (2013) 'Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks', Oxford University Press: New York.

Three elements of the social field determine which actors will pursue which boundary-making strategies: First, (political) institutions determine which classifications (ethnic, religious, class) are seen as relevant in society and are therefore plausible and attractive types of boundaries to draw (ibid: 973, 990). Second, the distribution of power influences an actor's capacity to shape the outcome of the negotiation: *"An actor will prefer that level of ethnic differentiation that is perceived to further her interests, given her endowment with economic, political, and symbolic resources."* (ibid: 992)

In this model, perceived interests are path dependent: they are guided by the institutional environment and already routinized cognitive schemes (ibid: 995). Furthermore, the endowment with power resources influences how consequential a pursued strategy of social closure is for others (ibid: 994). Networks of political alliances will eventually decide who are seen as to belong on which side of the boundary, and who will not be included as 'one of us' (ibid: 973, 990). These three elements make up the social field that sets the parameters for actors' boundary-making negotiations.

Boundary-making strategies consist of either boundary shifting by changing the topography of the boundary, or boundary modification by changing the meaning or membership of the boundary. Boundary shifting can occur in two forms: boundary expansion and boundary contraction. Nation-building is an example of boundary expansion, because it promotes more inclusive boundaries. Ethnic localism is an example of boundary contraction, because it promotes narrower boundaries than those already established (ibid: 987). In contrast to boundary shifting, boundary modification does not target the location of a boundary. Strategies of transvaluation aim to change the hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups. Normative inversion frames the excluded and despised as morally and culturally superior to the dominant group, often in the form of ideas of a chosen people (ibid: 988). In equalization the hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups is not challenged by reversing the order, but by dismissing a hierarchy all together. Strategies of boundary blurring contest ethnicity as a principle of categorization and social organization. Ethnic, national, or racial boundaries are delegitimized through emphasizing and promoting non-ethnic, cross-cutting social cleavages (ibid: 989). Finally, a positional move does not aim to change the location of a boundary, nor the principles of hierarchical ordering. Instead, one tries to change its own position (individual crossing) or the position of a group (collective re-positioning). This taxonomy is visualized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. "A taxonomy of boundary-making strategies" (Wimmer 2008b: 1044).
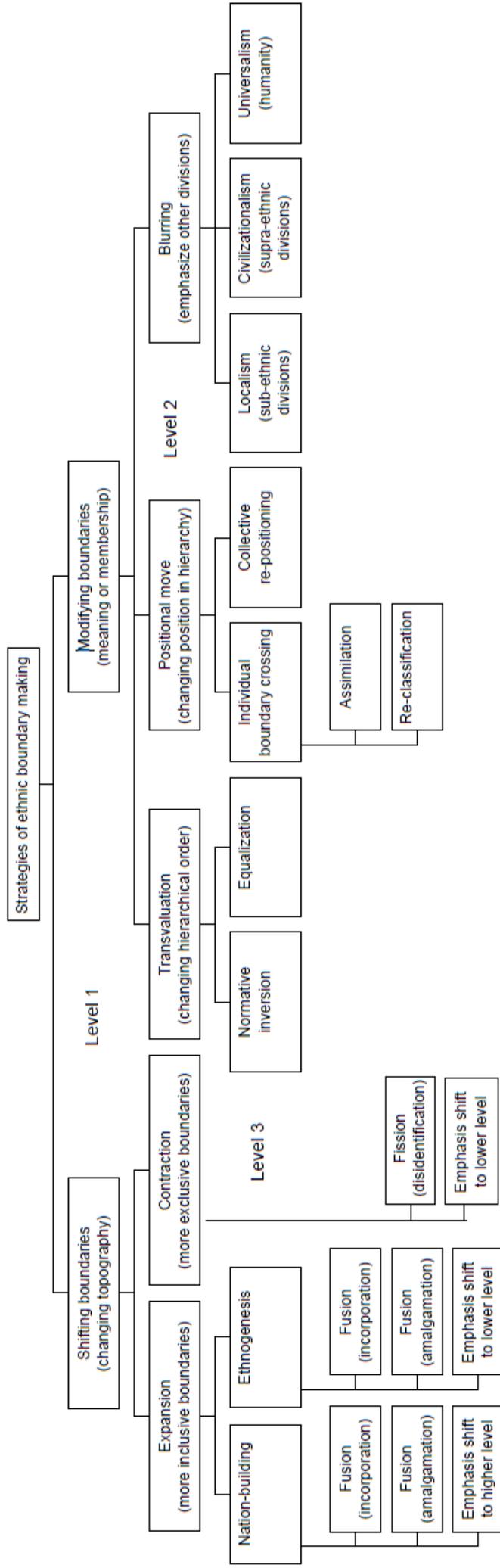
Boundary-making work in a national majority/ minorities scenario

In a national majority/ minorities scenario, there is a clear power imbalance between the nation-state and minority members. Those in control of the state apparatus have the law at their disposal to enforce a certain boundary, through for example institutionalized discrimination:

> *"Discrimination by those who control decisions over whom to hire, where to build roads, and to whom to give credit is much more consequential than the discriminatory practices of subordinate individuals and groups."* (Wimmer 2008b: 994)

However, the population at large is also persuaded to pursue ethnic boundary-making strategies through the categorization of the majority members as 'the people' of a particular state. This may leave them feeling entitled to privilege, justifying discrimination against minorities in everyday interactions (ibid: 991). Powerful actors have the ability to make their vision of the legitimate divisions in society publicly known and consequential for others. Often majority members police the boundary between them and minorities to obstruct them from entering the national 'us' (Wimmer 2008b: 1040). In response, *"Immigrants who struggle to gain the acceptance necessary for crossing the boundary into "the mainstream" may aim at selectively acquiring those traits that signal full membership."* (Wimmer 2009: 257) An 'us-them' divide in the form of a boundary between national majority and minorities may thus be enforced towards minorities, or minority members may be invited into the national majority through the encouragement of assimilation.

Passing and assimilation are indeed the main strategies to divert a minority stigma and escape boundary consequences like exclusion and discrimination (Wimmer 2008b: 988). This does not mean, however, that subordinate actors are powerless against hegemonic boundary-making. The boundary promoted by dominant actors may be contested through the development of counterdiscourses and by emphasizing divisions based on other social cleavages (ibid: 995). In fact, boundary blurring through an emphasis on non-ethnic sources of identity is an example of the dismissal of a dominant boundary, and another way to overcome minority status stigma (ibid: 992). The hegemonic power of dominant modes of boundary-making should therefore not be overstated. Moreover, the recognition of the possibility and existence of counterdiscourses helps to avoid mistaking powerful actors' categorizations for actual group formation in everyday life (ibid: 995).

Three ways to conceptualize the struggle over 'us' and 'them'

Wimmer

In Wimmer's model actors engage in a negotiation process with other actors who may prefer different types of boundaries (Wimmer 2008a: 997). Hence, boundary consensus – agreement over what constitutes the most important social division – occurs through a compromise. According to Wimmer's theory of cultural compromise,

> *"a consensus between individuals and groups endowed with different resources is more likely to emerge if their interests at least partially overlap and strategies of classification can therefore concur on a shared view."* (ibid: 998)

However, the concept of a consensus does not mean that actors share the exact same interests. A consensus may also result from the exchange of resources between actors in different positions. Such a cultural compromise is negotiated both at the elitist political level, as well as in everyday social interactions (ibid: 999).

In a national majority/ minorities scenario the exchange of resources and partial overlap of interests reflects a particular constellation of power, inequality, and political alliances (ibid: 998). This may lead to a partial boundary consensus. When the agreement upon the boundary is completely one-sided, Wimmer speaks of an asymmetrical consensus (ibid: 1000). In both cases, a reached cultural compromise is constantly reinterpreted by every group and individual to fit their own interests. Consensus over a boundary is thus a dynamic and ever ongoing process. Within boundary-making work, a cultural compromise should be thought of as limiting the range of possibilities within which actors can argue their search for power and recognition (ibid: 1001).

Consensus through compromise thus solves the tension between agency and structure in Wimmer's model. Jenkins criticizes this idea for its inherent determinism, arguing that in this view *"individual agency gradually comes into line with structural realities (and of course reproduces them)."* (Jenkins 2014: 811) In reply to Jenkins, Wimmer asserts that his model identifies internal and external sources of change (2014: 837). Through for example the formation of social movements (internal) or the emergence of new actors or resources (external), the nature of the negotiation may be altered, enabling potential change in boundary consensus.

Yuval-Davis

The struggle over who does and who does not belong is coined by Yuval-Davis (2006) as the politics of belonging. The politics of belonging consists of hegemonic political powers maintaining and reproducing boundaries of belonging, as well as other (political) actors contesting and challenging these boundaries. Yuval-Davis therefore describes the politics of

belonging as *"the dirty work of boundary maintenance"* (2006: 204). In Yuval-Davis' view, belonging should be thought of as an ongoing dynamic process, only taking on the false outlook of a naturalized phenomenon through particular forms of hegemonic power relations (ibid: 199). Through such a constellation of power, belonging to either side of a boundary can thus become forced upon people, appearing as destiny. However, a focus on the politics of belonging enables the analysis of struggle and resistance against hegemonic boundaries and their internalization (ibid: 203). Yuval-Davis emphasizes how an actor's promotion of a particular boundary is a complex coming together of the struggle for their collectivity and a way for that actor to enforce its own individual power position (ibid: 205). His analysis of naturalized belonging as an illusion created by a particular constellation of power follows the same line of thought as Wimmer's cultural compromise: Through a – symmetric, partial, or asymmetric – consensus, a negotiated boundary becomes thought of and acted upon as a fixed social division.

According to Yuval-Davis, actors often employ particular requirements a person needs to meet to be entitled to belong to the collectivity (ibid: 209). In a national majority/ minorities scenario the myth of a common descent is hard to maintain and does therefore not function well as a requirement for belonging. Who is and who is not entitled to belong tends in such cases to be decided through levels of loyalty and solidarity based upon a set of common values (ibid 2006: 209). Compared to more racialized requirements such as (the idea of) common descent and 'race', or requirements such as language and culture that push for assimilation, the requirement to adhere to common values suggests that the boundaries of the community of belonging are permeable. However, as Yuval-Davis points out, *"some political projects of belonging can present themselves as promoting more open boundaries than they actually do."* (ibid: 209)

For example, when liberal ethical and political values are perceived to be inherent personal characteristics of members of particular national or regional communities, even the requirement of adhering to a set of common values comes to signify not a permeable, but an exclusionary boundary (ibid: 212).

Bracke (grounded in Althusser)

Yuval-Davis' propositions about belonging coincide with Wimmer's structurationist position. Bracke (2011) also conceptualizes the struggle over who legitimately belongs to the national identity as a conversation. She however emphasizes the power of dominant discourses in shaping that conversation, thus leaning towards a more structure centered approach.

Bracke studied the ways in which the public debate on emancipation in the Netherlands addresses young Muslim women, and how this in turn informs the ways in which they engage with that debate. Her analysis is built upon the notion of interpellation: she focuses on the

process of 'talking back' by actors *"whose constituency and agency is always already informed by the terms in which she is addressed."* (Bracke 2011: 29)

To illustrate the process of interpellation Bracke summarizes Althusser's famous scene through which he explains the relation between ideology and the subject: *"A police officer, representing the Law, hails a subject in the street, and the subject turns around and by doing so accepts the terms in which she is hailed."* (ibid: 37) This scenario shows how, in Althusserian theory, a subject comes into being through a submission to power. In 'talking back', the subject (at least partially) relies on or points back to the dominant discourse it was interpellated by (ibid: 43).[15] This submission is challenged by what Althusser calls 'bad subjects':

> *"Bad subjects, Althusser asserts, are those subjects where interpellation does not just 'work' by itself, that is where ideology shows its cracks, and who provoke the intervention of the repressive state apparatus."* (ibid: 37)

In her study, Bracke employs the notion of bad subjects to analyze young Muslim women's responses to the emancipation debate that question the terms on which they were interpellated and challenge the ideology underlying the debate. The concepts of 'interpellation' and 'bad subjects' as used by Bracke are useful for this study because they offer another way to look at boundary-making work provoked by hegemonic boundary-making processes, such as the formation of counterdiscourses. In other words: Bracke's interpretation of Althusser functions as an analytical frame to think about how boundary-making strategies are influenced by parameters in the social field.

The risk of Reification

In one way or another, all three conceptualizations of the negotiation over a minority's belonging to national identity point to a process of boundary reinforcement despite disagreement about that boundary, leaving the boundary between a national majority and minorities to be seen as agreed upon, natural, or even destiny. In fact, this process of reinforcement may lead people to confuse ethnic categories for ethnic groups, instead of distinguishing between the two concepts as proposed by Jenkins in the beginning of this chapter.

Mistaking categories for groups was coined by Brubaker (2002) as 'groupism', insisting that the scholarly notion of ethnic groups should be replaced by group membership – a shared sense of 'groupness' (Brubaker 2002 in Jenkins 2008: 8). The practice of groupism finds its roots in primordialism: even though in academic thought the Barthist view on ethnicity as a social

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[15] To read more about Althusser's theory of interpellation and the interpretation followed by Bracke, see: Althusser, L. ed. (1971). 'ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)' in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, Monthly Review Press: London; and Butler, J. (1997). *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA.

construct is widely agreed upon, the social plasticity of ethnic labels tends to be overlooked and ethnic groupness is mistaken for ethnic groups connected to a (historical) natural base.

Baumann (1999) explains how the man-made concept of 'ethnicity' becomes seen and treated as a fact of nature through the process of reification. Reification, also named 'thingification', is the process through which a phenomenon that does not exist prior to human usage – a social construct, is employed in such a way that it has real consequences. When used and acted upon as if it has a natural base, the phenomenon then becomes perceived and experienced as an actual 'thing'. Bauman uses the definition of Berger and Luckmann (1967) to explain reification:

> *"Reification is the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, ... the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something other than human products – such as facts of nature. ... Man, the producer of a world, is apprehended as its product, and human activity as an epiphenomenon of non-human processes."* (Berger & Luckmann 1967 in Baumann 1999: 63)

The reification of ethnic groups, Brubaker's 'groupism', is particularly powerful in a national majority/ minorities scenario where society is structured upon differences attributed to ethnicity. When structures of inequality are rationalized through ascribed cultural differences, such as ethnic categories, ethnicity is given the appearance of an autonomous factor in reality, naturally ordering the social world (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 61).

Discriminatory practices are not the only site where reification of (ethnic) boundaries takes place, it also proves a trap for anti-racists battling discrimination. By pointing to ethnic distinctions as the source of discrimination, these distinctions are presented as objectively real. Thus, battling discrimination on arguments that assume ethnic differences, reinforces the belief that these differences are absolute:

> *"The very fact that such action is conducted by and for groups marked by their cultural identities confirms the perceptions that these identities do provide the only available basis of collective action."* (ibid: 62)

Therefore, if mobilization against discrimination is done along the same boundaries upon which the discriminatory practices are built, that boundary is reified: *"Unless one is careful, one risks feeding the very monster one set out to kill."* (Baumann 1999: 63) This does not mean, however, that once reified a phenomenon is set in stone. Reification is an ongoing, constantly contested process. Nevertheless, the risk of reification complicates effective contestation of exclusionary boundaries. For this reason I will employ the concept of reification to understand the process through which counterdiscourses potentially reproduce parameters set in the social field.

A critical note: An attempt to avoid 'The Herderian Trap'

Reifying ethnicity through what Brubaker coined as 'groupism', is described by Wimmer as the Herderian trap. This concept refers to Herder's primordialist view in which

> *"the world is made up of peoples each distinguished by a unique culture (1), held together by communitarian solidarity (2), and bound by shared identity (3). They thus form the self-evident units of observation and analysis (4) for any historical or social inquiry—the most meaningful way of subdividing the population of humans."* (Wimmer 2009: 246)

Wimmer's discussion of Herder's social ontology draws attention to another site where ethnic boundaries are reified: in the work of academics studying ethnicity. Research thematically centered around national majority/ minority relations is at high risk of falling into the Herderian trap of homogenizing and essentializing ethnic groups when it takes ethnic groups as self-evident units of analysis, assuming that the analysis of immigrant incorporation benefits from splitting immigrant society up in its different ethnic groups (ibid: 247).

Moreover, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) discuss how academic work on and usage of the term 'identity' may implicitly suggest the actual existence of identities, in the process reifying the phenomenon (2000: 1). Notwithstanding the reality and importance of everyday identity talk and identity politics, Brubaker and Cooper argue that 'identity' as a category of practice does not mean we need to use it as a category of analysis as well (2000: 5). Instead, analysis of identity politics should try to explain this process of reification:

> *"We should seek to explain the processes and mechanisms through which what has been called the 'politicalfiction' of the 'nation' – or of the 'ethnic group', 'race', or other putative 'identity' – can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality."* (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 5)

According to Brubaker and Cooper, the power to reify boundaries between national majority and minorities into compelling reality is centered within the modern state who has formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization within authorative institutions at its disposal (2000: 15). However, no state has the monopoly over de production and promotion of boundaries, identifications and categories, nor are those produced by the state blindly accepted and internalized: they are subject to contestation (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 16).

To avoid reifying identity as a 'thing' that people can have or be, Jenkins proposes to abandon the term 'identity' and instead speak of the ongoing and open-ended processes of 'identification': the interplay between outside categorization and self-identification in a particular power context (Jenkins 2008: 9). Moreover, Brubaker and Cooper suggest a focus on the agency of the actors involved in boundary-making or 'identifying', to escape the Herderian trap of

presupposing that identifying by powerful actors necessarily results in static, distinctive, eternal, bounded groupsness (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 14).

I have tried to take these risks and potential cures into account by drawing predominantly on Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making model for my analysis. A focus on national majority/ minorities boundaries as the outcome of a struggle between all actors in society, including actors at the institutional level, helps to avoid the Herderian trap (Wimmer 2009: 257). By looking at ethnic divisions as the outcome of processes that need to be studied instead of the starting point for analysis, a boundary-making approach thus avoids taking the division between national majority members and minorities for granted.

As discussed in the introduction, I treat Islamophobia as a factor in the social field, limiting the maneuver room for British born Pakistani Muslims to strategically negotiate their belonging to British national identity. The next chapter will explore my informants' experiences of how they are categorized by outsiders, and discuss the parameters of the social field they feel restrict them in their identification processes.

3. Experiences of a social field: Feeling pushed into moderateness

According to Wimmer, ethnic boundary-making work is always situated in a social field. This chapter investigates the restrictive characteristics of the social field, which limit the room for British born Pakistani Muslims to negotiate their belonging to British national identity. I will not, however, attempt to give an overview of the social field in which this negotiation is situated. This study is concerned with how experienced limitations of the social field influence counter hegemonic boundary-making strategies. Therefore, this chapter will explore the different restrictive factors my informants experienced and spoke about in our interviews, discussions, and during events I attended.

As explained in the introduction, in the context of British born Muslims in the United Kingdom, I use the concept of Islamophobia in its broadest sense as the ideology in which Muslims are not part of the British community of belonging. My informants uniformly stated they felt the general public believes being British and being Muslim is incompatible. Ruba, twenty-seven years old, speaks on how this tendency in the public debate confuses her:

> *"Over the last ten years I've noticed it much more. And I've never understood it because I always think; I can be all of them, I am all of them , I do not understand. Even today I don't really understand what the discussion is about, because to me it does not contradict at all."*[16]

Ruba's quote is emblematic for how my informants experienced this incompatibility as something alien to them: the problematization of their Britishness which they experience from wider society does not correspond with their own identification processes. However, this does not mean that they only encountered the problematization of both identities through the media or interactions with non-Muslims. Haseeb, twenty-eight years old, usually wears quite traditional Islamic clothing. The story he told me about discussions he has had with his father regarding his looks is a good example of how the image of what a British Muslim should look like has been internalized by many Muslims themselves:

> *"It's obvious that the general public does not feel that Muslim and being British is compatible. That's just the way it feels, that's just the way we get treated. It's gone that far, that it's in my dad's head: why don't you dress more British, why don't you be more British? Well I am. I am more British than you, you were born in Pakistan mate. You know what I'm saying. Just because you dress a certain way doesn't make you more British than me. So*

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[16] Author's interview on 31/03/2015 in Birmingham.

even you know to him, I don't know it's put out there subconsciously that if you're a Muslim, you're a certain, way. If you're British you're a certain way."[17]

This quote illustrates how negotiations over belonging to British national identity are multi-sited, taking place between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as within Muslim communities.

Three factors kept occurring in informants' stories which they felt contributed to the incompatibility-narrative, and thus restricted them in their negotiation to be part of British national community of belonging: being categorized as suspects of terrorism, a growing emphasis on British values, and a push for practicing a moderate version of Islam. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss all these three factors and illustrate them with quotes and narratives from informants.

Experienced categorization: Guilty before innocent

The first factor that featured frequently in my informants' stories was how they felt stigmatized as potential terrorists. Maha, twenty-nine years old, describes how she feels both her Muslim identity and her Britishness have come to be perceived differently since 9/11:

> *"I think before the whole 9/11 fiasco, being Muslim didn't feature. But since then, every other bit of news that you hear is about Islam. It makes you question whether I am even viable to be British, because I know that my identity of a Muslim will always be brought at the forefront rather than being British. I think rather than seeing us as British, seeing us as Muslim comes beforehand. So the Britishness gets pushed back a bit. Because they identify not with where we are born, they identify with some militant group, the Britishness doesn't even feature."*[18]

Moreover, several informants reported situations in which they were perceived to be terrorists. Mashaal, eighteen years old, spoke about how she often feels people are staring at her on the bus, afraid of her carrying a 'suspicious' backpack. Haseeb spoke of an elderly lady having a panic attack because she was seated next to him on an airplane.

As discussed in the introduction, counter extremism measures in the United Kingdom have exacerbated the 'us-them' divide between non-Muslims and Muslims, and have designated Muslims as a 'suspect community'. A topic that was mentioned by several of the informants in relation to counter extremism was the selectiveness of the right to free speech, how it applies differently to Muslims:

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[17] Author's interview, conducted on 29 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[18] Author's interview, conducted on 27 April 2015 in Birmingham.

"Freedom of speech is very selective. Even in this country we have laws that promote the freedom of speech. But then they can also punish people that say certain things, that don't apply to the aims and roles of the government. So do we have freedom of speech or is it selective?" (Faria, twenty-one years old)[19]

"It's always like one group has the right to be heard, the right to criticize, the right to insult, but the other doesn't: they are not allowed to retaliate, they can't say what they think. It just not works both ways." (Ilsa, twenty-one years old)[20]

Another concern that featured among many of the people I encountered were the even more intrusive measures embedded in the 2015 Crime, Terrorism and Security Act.[21] One of the changes that came with that act is that the government's anti-terrorism strategy now has to be implemented on a statutory basis, making it a legal requirement for bodies such as universities, hospitals and even nurseries to implement it at the risk of prosecution otherwise. As is sketched by Malia Bouattia, the NUS Black students' officer,[22] this is directly putting Muslims under suspicion:

"So you can imagine it is planting the fear in everybody. Everybody is suspecting everybody because they worry they are going to get in some sort of trouble should somewhere along the line the person they talked to in their classroom partakes in extremist activities. It is clarified to us as a community that it doesn't matter what you do or say, you're instantly guilty first, and you have to do your absolute best, you have to give us everything, and even then you'll still be questioned whether you should be given basic human rights and treated as an equal to let's say white non-Muslim counterparts in society."[23]

All the above quotes and stories point towards an increased feeling amongst my informants that they are being stigmatized as terrorists, seen as guilty before innocent. My data suggest a twofold link between this tendency and feeling restricted in belonging to British national identity. First, as well put by Abdullah Saif, Birmingham's manager for the Muslim Association of Britain, perceptions of counter extremism measures unfairly targeting Muslims result in alienation from British mainstream society:

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[19] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.

[20] Author's interview, conducted on 27 April 2015 in Birmingham.

[21] See for an elaborate discussion of the changes that came with the 2015 CTS Act and its impact on civil liberties: Liberty80 (2015) 'Liberty's Second Reading briefing on the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill in the House of Lords', published online in January 2015, consulted by author on 19 July 2015.

[22] National Union of Students.

[23] During a panel discussion as part of the event 'Je Suis Muslim: a workshop on grassroots mobilization against Islamophobia' on 28 February 2015, at a community centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.

> *"It* [Prevent] *is oppressive no doubt. It is this disparity and that there is this parallel justice or criminal system is what really harms Muslims and what makes Muslims feel it is difficult for them to engage and integrate or whatever it is."*[24]

Second, the association of Muslims with terrorism has a very direct consequence in the form of a rise in Islamophobic attacks. As was mentioned in the introduction, levels of anti-Muslim hatred in the United Kingdom have been steadily on the rise, with noticeable sparks after (inter)national terrorism related incidents. Almost half of the informants reported experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment targeted against them, and all of the informants knew someone in their immediate surroundings who was a victim of an Islamophobic incident.[25] Stories of Islamophobic hate crimes played a prominent role in convincing informants that broader society believes being British and being Muslim is incompatible.

A nationalist factor: Emphasis on 'common' values

The second factor that was mentioned by informants as setting them apart from mainstream British society consists of an experienced increase in the emphasis on 'British' values. 'British' values as a concept used in contemporary public debates originates from the government's counter extremism strategy 'Prevent'. In this strategy, extremism is defined as the "*vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.*" (HM Government 2013) The origin in counter extremism thought makes 'British' values far from a neutral concept. The introduction of 'British' values as the anti-definition of extremism directly links the suspicion of Muslims to the problematization of their belonging to the British nation. Whether or not you are perceived as a terrorist is now interlinked with whether or not you are considered to be British enough: those who are viewed as lacking 'British' values are labeled as extreme. This is well explained by Syeda, a young mother:

> *"I think it* [British values] *is a very imposed idea, actually it is the kind of idea that really enforces Islamophobia: the concept of not being British enough, of Muslims constantly having to prove their Britishess."*[26]

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[24] Author's interview, conducted on 23 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[25] My findings through this study hint at a prevalence of 'lower-level' hate crime in the everyday lives of informants. This suggests that a shift of focus is needed from hate crimes committed against Muslims, although important and influential, to more subtle experiences of anti-Muslim sentiments. For more information on this topic see Hargreaves (2015).
[26] Author's interview, conducted on 19 March 2015 in Birmingham.

Over a third of my informants stated they did not understand what 'British' values were. Moreover, over half of the informants indicated they felt (discussions around) 'British' values were alienating Muslims. My conversation with Ilsa on British values is emblematic of how the concept is experienced as a way to exclude Muslims:

> *"Whenever you hear the term British values it is to point out that certain groups of people do not conform to those values and those people tend to be the Muslims. I have no idea what they mean by that, because if the values they mean are things like being a good citizen, caring for your neighbor, doing charitable things and voting, then I do that, and everyone I know does that. Most Muslims will do that. So I am not sure what they mean by British values. Unless it is everything that Islam is not. Because I do not understand otherwise. That is what they make you think. That whatever Islam represents, it is not British values."* [27]

Ilsa's experience clearly shows how the emphasis on 'British' values intensifies the idea that being British and being Muslim is somehow problematic. Amongst my informants, this was not just observed as an abstract process, but felt as directly impacting upon their own identification processes. Mashaal perfectly illustrates how the reoccurrence of 'British' values relates to her feelings of belonging:

> *"I feel like when it* [British values] *comes up in the media it is brought up to socially exclude people like me. Because we are not considered to be British. We are seen as people who are temporarily to some degree. Which is quite inhuman. Because it's like this fear that one day we are told to leave and we have no place of belonging anymore."* [28]

A religious factor: Push for moderateness

Both the first and second factor entail a burden of proof for my informants. The terrorist stigma leaves informants feeling they have to prove themselves to be 'innocent', and as Syeda's quote described, an emphasis on 'British' values has left my informants feeling they have to prove their Britishness. As the government's definition of extremism suggests, proving your Britishness is in this context interlinked with proving you are not 'extreme'. The need to prove your 'innocence' and Britishness might therefore be better described as the need to distance yourself from anything or anyone deemed 'extreme' and subsequent need to fall into the category of 'moderate'. Zain, twenty years old, describes very clearly how this has led him to feel he has to choose between not being labeled as 'extremist' and practicing his faith the way he sees fit:

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[27] Author's interview, conducted on 27 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[28] Author's interview, conducted on 13 April 2015 in Birmingham.

"I feel like terrorism is now used to reform Muslims. To push them to prove that they are something they are not. This demand for apology is causing Muslims to have several questions in their heads: how do I prove that I am normal? And how do I prove that I am not one of these guys? And when the two of these mix, it gets very confusing. I really don't want to be seen as extreme. But I do want to portray the orthodox version of Islam. It's the fact that, I feel that I have to pick between the two, it's confusing for me."[29]

Zain's dilemma illustrates a trend which I observed throughout my data. Informants felt that the environment in which they had to prove themselves, was pushing them to portray or even practice their religion in a moderate way, because being British appears to be interlinked with not being 'extreme'. Another story by Haseeb shows again how this process is not limited to interactions with non-Muslims, but is found within Muslim communities as well:

"Because now there is a whole bunch of Muslims out there that think that someone that looks like me is a terrorist. Like in my former job I was praying in a quiet room and hearing people say: 'Why is he praying, why has he gone so extreme.' I remember people coming up to me asking: 'Why are you dressing like that, are you joining Al Qaeda or something? Are you joining the Taliban, why do you have a beard, are you going to blow yourself up now?'"[30]

What this statement makes clear is that within Muslim communities and beyond, a distinction is made between those who are 'extreme' and those who are not. As illustrated by Zain's thoughts, a strict moderate/ extremist divide and the stigma associated with the latter category has left informants feeling pushed away from choosing to live an orthodox Islamic lifestyle. At the same time, Haseeb embodies a counter example since he is very openly and visibly orthodox Muslim. Nevertheless, he too experiences judgments about this lifestyle. My informants were therefore not literally forced into being moderate, but they did feel their environment was pushing them into that category. Muslim Association of Britain's Abdullah Saif explains why he feels the category of 'moderate' is unpopular with British Muslims, and the worries he has regarding the strict moderate/ extremist divide:

"I think that kind of secular Muslim whatever the term is, is a turn off for a lot of Muslims. Especially as a large number of Muslims are now becoming orthodox in their approach and there is a fear that you criminalize orthodoxy. Or that you make it labeled as extremist or whatever. No one knows what extremist is, no one knows what moderate is. For Muslims who are kind of engaged in this discussion these words are highly politicized. Moderate as a bit 'yes sir, no sir, how much sugars sir', that kind of thing. I think that kind of language and

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[29] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[30] Author's interview, conducted on 29 April 2015 in Birmingham.

those kind of prefixes to the title Muslim is damaging, very damaging. Because it doesn't come from Muslims, it comes from non-Muslims, it doesn't actually represent anyone."[31]

The criminalization of orthodoxy Abdullah addresses here points to the conflation of religious conservatism with extremism. It becomes hard to avoid categorization as 'extremist' when this label is put upon common religious practices and ideologies. Since a strict moderate/ extremist divide is associated with the criminalization of orthodoxy, 'moderate' is not a popular category amongst my informants. NUS Black Students' officer Malia Bouattia gives a very clear analysis of the power dynamics which give rise to this divide. She argues that it is pushing people into the 'moderate' category, because it nullifies dissident voices by labeling them as 'extreme':

> *"Because of the power dynamics in society and the different levels of cultural capital afforded to Muslims in comparison to non-Muslim Europeans, the power to define moderate and extremist Muslims, lies with the dominant culture. So you are either moderate or extremist on their terms, not on your own, and not on any prescribed theological terms that you adhere to. Legitimizing this distinction allows those in power to construct and describe your own identity around you. In this case, a so called 'moderate' Muslim being someone who uncritically accepts European values such as secular liberalism, who identifies as a 'proud' British Muslim and will not speak out against western interventions in Muslim lands, will not speak on matters related to Palestine, will not be critical of anti-terrorism legislation. So basically, the pacified subject."*[32]

Malia summarizes here how the moderate/ extremist divide is embedded in particular power relations, impacting upon British Muslims' identification processes. Moreover, her quote shows the interlinkages between all three restrictive factors: my informants experienced an intertwining of religious and nationalist conditions which they felt they had to adhere to in order to be seen as part of the British national community of belonging.

Inter-organization competition for moderateness

According to Wimmer, the location and characteristics of ethnic boundaries eventually depends upon the representational politics shaped by the social field (2008a: 986). In this regard, there is one more process that needs to be mentioned: the strive for moderateness amongst Muslim community organizations. In the wake of 7/7 ties between the government and traditional organizations were severed, because Muslim-government relations were deemed a failure. In order to fill this void the government wanted a new organization that they could talk about Muslim communities with, but with this need came a set of unwritten criteria: you claim to

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[31] Author's interview, conducted on 23 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[32] During a panel discussion as part of the event 'Je Suis Muslim: a workshop on grassroots mobilization against Islamophobia' on 28 February 2015, at a community centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.

represent a significant amount of Muslim organizations and communities, your discourse is in line with that of the government, and you declare that you are moderate.[33] As a result, Muslim organizations felt pressured to distance themselves from any persons, actions, or views that others may view as extreme (Allen & Isakjee 2015: 13). In an interview, Allen describes this tendency as an inter-organization competition for moderateness:

> *"When you sit at the table with politicians, you have one group coming in and they will say we are moderate Muslims, the next group will come in and say we are moderate mainstream Muslims, the next group will say we are moderate mainstream middle of the road Muslims, the next group will come in and say we are ex-Muslims, we know all about them."*[34]

This process makes it hard for organizations to voice the sentiments and concerns of the communities they claim to represent, because it limits inclusion and empowerment to 'moderate', pro-government organizations (Allen & Isakjee 2015: 13). Moreover, this strive for moderateness further stigmatizes conservative views. Muslims Association of Britain's Abdullah Saif describes how this process effects which Muslim voices and opinions are heard and which are disregarded:

> *"Especially those organizations that are funded by the government, they can sometimes not be as loud about their views as they would want to. They don't want to come across as too extreme or too radical, too anti-government even. Therefore what they say and how they say it is watered down. What this is creating I guess, is on the other side an extreme voice whereby because there is such a watered down version of one side of the argument, any other argument now becomes an extreme view.*[35]

Abdullah's quote illustrates how inter-organization competition for moderateness feeds into a strict moderate/ extremist divide. Even though these organizations may not actually be representative of their communities, the narratives promoted within and through these organizations who are in dialogue with government are important in shaping the characteristics of the social field, because of their role in government consultations and media appearances. Therefore, their strive for moderateness feeds further into the demarcation of those who are politicized in the 'right' way and those who are politicized in the 'wrong' way, with the latter being labeled as 'extremist'.

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[33] Author's interview, conducted on 13 May 2015 at the University of Birmingham.
[34] Author's interview, conducted on 13 May 2015 at the University of Birmingham.
[35] Author's interview, conducted on 23 April 2015 in Birmingham.

In summary, this chapter presented the three main factors that were abstracted from my informants' stories which they felt restrict their negotiation over the boundaries of national identity. Firstly, informants feel stigmatized as potential terrorists. Secondly, an emphasis on 'British' values leaves my informants feeling excluded from the national 'us' and having to prove their Britishness. Thirdly, a strict moderate/ extremist divide restricts my informants in practicing their faith as they see fit, and suggests they have to be categorized as 'moderate' in order to be accepted as British. As was intelligently explained by Malia Bouattia, the power to define who and what is moderate, does not lay with my informants. This complicates my informants' negotiation over the boundaries of national identity, because they feel dependent on conditions they have no control over. Moreover, inter-organization competition for moderateness reinforces a strict moderate/ extremist divide, contributing to a climate in which my informants feel 'pushed' into appearing moderate. The next chapter will discuss my informants' boundary-making strategies in response to the hegemonic 'us' and 'them', and will explore their relationship to restrictive factors as outlined in this chapter.

4. Counterdiscourses: Responding to 'us and them'

As was outlined in chapter two, Wimmer differentiates between five boundary-making strategies:

1. establishing a new boundary by expanding the range of people included;
2. contracting boundaries by reducing the range of people included;
3. changing the meaning of an existing boundary by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories;
4. boundary crossing by changing one's own categorical membership;
5. boundary blurring through emphasizing other, non-ethnic social cleavages.

In this chapter I will explore the different boundary-making strategies that my informants pursue in order to negotiate their belonging to British national identity. First, I will discuss how the moderate/ extremist divide has led people to (indirectly) assimilate into the category of 'moderate'. Next, I will discuss the three main counter narratives that oppose or challenge the divide which I came across during my fieldwork. The concluding paragraphs will analyze how these boundary-making strategies relate to the limiting factors of the social field as presented in the previous chapter.

Assimilation: Aiming for moderateness

Assimilation through behavioral change of the person who intends to cross a boundary is named by Wimmer as one of the main strategies to leave a minority stigma behind and 'shift sides' (Wimmer 2008b: 1039). In the stories of my informants I observed two forms of aiming for moderateness: active assimilation into British mainstream culture and passive assimilation through self-censorship on controversial topics.

Informants spoke about active assimilation into British mainstream culture in order to be seen as 'moderate'. Especially in more 'white British' environments, informants reported adjusting their behavior or even complete identity shifts in order to fit in and be seen as 'one of us'. Repeatedly, the University of Birmingham was mentioned a space where informants felt they had to emphasize their British identity. Throughout my interview with Amna, nineteen years old, she spoke about how she feels she has increasingly left her Pakistani and Muslim identity behind in order to fit in with wider society. Her analysis of her change in behavior from her first to her second year of university is emblematic of this need to assimilate:

"I think at university I'm totally showing my British side to fit in. I think last year, my first year, I was pretty much trying to bring some diversity to my classes and stuff, but I felt left out. Because the other kids would just get together and go out and to the pub and stuff and I couldn't identify with that. So this year I've tried to fit in to conform to that and I do feel a bit bad. But it has meant that I've made more friends and that they see me as one of them now. I think at times you have to do that."[36]

Kiran, nineteen years old, even spoke about how the stigma surrounding Muslims and Islam contributed to her leaving her religion behind. Because being Pakistani and being Muslim had seemed 'dirty' to her in her teenage years, she no longer wanted to be associated with any of those labels and preferred 'to be just called British'. When I asked her about changes in people's behavior in response to the Islamophobia, she reflected on this process by stating she had internalized the anti-Muslim sentiments of the public discourse:

"People have taken their scarf off. They have taken their scarf off. That's why it's so sad, I feel like I'm the product of society, the Islamophobia or the anti-Muslim. And I hate that. But I feel like I'm too far gone, in my own identity."[37]

However, Kiran and Amna were the exception amongst the people I have spoken to. Mostly, the topic of (forced) assimilation came up when informants discussed and judged other people's behavior, while emphasizing they themselves would not give into anti-Muslim climate by changing their ways. This is perfectly illustrated by Mashaal, when she discusses responses to the Islamophobic graffiti on campus:

"I think walking on campus sometimes being a Muslim can be a bit of a threat in a way, because of the Islamophobic graffiti and the self-proclaimed neo-Nazi group that's around. But the thing is, I don't really let it bother me. I'm doing my own thing, it's fine and I don't really care. Because once you start caring, you start to change. I don't want to be a person that I am not. I think some people might want to make it incompatible completely, like they fully assimilate in their way of thinking. It made me cautious in that sense, but not in taming down how Muslim I am. That's just me, I'm not going to change that because you're a bit racist."[38]

Secondly, I observed a more subtle, passive way of aiming for 'moderateness' in the form of self-censorship. Informants mentioned how they (at times) retracted from stating their views, either because they were convinced their views would not be taken seriously, or because they feared the consequences of doing so.

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[36] Author's interview, conducted on 27 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[37] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[38] Author's interview, conducted on 13 April 2015 in Birmingham.

All but one informant mentioned they felt they could not openly criticize Britain, because as a Muslim they would not be taken seriously. Mashaal's thoughts on the topic are emblematic of this trend:

"I feel like my identity as a Muslim would for some people always feel as affecting my judgement in some way. They would feel my views are too radical. It keeps me from being taken seriously by non-Muslim people."[39]

Furthermore, three informants explicitly stated they self-censored in order to avoid the 'extremist' label and associated risks. Criticism of Britain's foreign policy was the most frequent occurring example of topics on which informants felt they could not openly state their views. Osama, eighteen years old, for example indicates how him criticizing Britain's foreign policy will lead to him being labeled as an Islamist:

"If I were to criticize Britain on something, mostly likely it would be foreign policy. I think I would be seen as an Islamist if I was to do that, and supportive of these organizations, which I am not at all. I would be labeled as that and that view is widely held, so I can't do that openly."[40]

Naeem, twenty-one years old, touches upon the risks involved in these criticisms when he explains why he avoids talking about foreign policy at his internship:

"Because if I talked about anything concerning big agendas like anything to do with war, I would just stay away, I wouldn't even bother talking about it. Because whatever my ideas are, there would be a worry. Even if what I would say also came out of a white person, it would be misrepresented and twisted. It would be a very risky situation, because you would not know what would happen. You have to be careful about what you say, and it's better to just say nothing sometimes. Just keep out of that discussion."[41]

Finally, Ilsa told me how her brother was forced to leave university after writing something that his teacher, who she labeled as an Islamophoob, considered to be out of line. Ilsa, who is highly politicized and has strong activist ambitions, then spoke of how this has led her parents to advise her to keep her head down. She perfectly describes the implication of labeling any critical Muslim voices as 'extreme': people will avoid the risk connected with that label by staying silent.

"So my parents say to me, just get your degree, don't be too active. And that is quite sad, because freedom of speech, where is that? If you talk out too much, and if you voice your

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[39] Author's interview, conducted on 13 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[40] Author's interview, conducted on 06 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[41] Author's interview, conducted on 20 April 2015 in Birmingham.

opinions, you may get penalized for it. And that is a very real thing. They kind of try to stop me from becoming too active, politically and about my faith and stuff. And I don't want that happening to me, what happened to him. I do really think that if I try and state what I think, that can happen."[42]

Assimilation in the form of aiming for moderateness can be categorized as a strategy of individual boundary crossing. However, self-censorship does not appear as an active boundary-making strategy. Instead, people retreat from actively opposing or crossing the boundary by staying silent, thus opting out of the boundary negotiation process. Nevertheless, this 'non-action' impacts upon the negotiation process. According to Wimmer,

"status change through boundary crossing or re-positioning thus reproduces the overall hierarchy by reinforcing its empirical significance and normative legitimacy. It shows to those who move and those who stay that there is no 'in-between' and that the social world is indeed structured along hierarchical lines." (Wimmer 2008b: 1039)

Even though self-censorship is not an active strategy for status change, it does reify that categorization of 'moderate' is preferred over 'extreme', and that there is no 'in-between'. Therefore the effect of both processes of aiming for 'moderateness' is the same: they reinforce the moderate/ extremist divide and thus reify the parameters in the social field.

Counterdiscourse 1: Show people 'True' Islam

The first counterdiscourse that I came across during my fieldwork actively opposes the moderate/ extremist binary by creating a category of 'True Muslims'. During my fieldwork, boundary-making strategies were most visible when discussing what should be done to battle Islamophobia. A response commonly cited during panel discussions, conferences and workshops was to show people 'True' Islam. Nearly half of my informants explicitly mentioned a version of showing 'True' Islam as the proper response to a climate of Islamophobia. The idea behind showing 'True' Islam is well summarized by Haseeb:

"The best way to tackle Islamophobia is to be a good Muslim. Then you don't have to say anything. If you are being nice or doing good and people see why you are doing that, because that is what Islam teaches you. If you want to defend Islam, that's the best way."[43]

Within 'showing 'True' Islam' being a 'good' Muslim cannot simply be equated with abiding to the category of 'moderate', because here religious conservatism is not seen as problematic. Instead of 'taming down' one's Muslimness, 'showing 'True' Islam' propagates practicing Islam in its most

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[42] Author's interview, conducted on 27 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[43] Author's interview, conducted on 29 April 2015 in Birmingham.

correct and true sense, in order to counter anti-Muslim sentiments. Hence, in this narrative, the incompatibility of being a 'good' British citizen and being outwardly conservative Muslim is challenged. One of the founders of the 'Love Muhammed' campaign, Muhammad Araghi, touches upon challenging this incompatibility when he explains what 'showing 'True' Islam' means to him:

> *"The only acceptable way to practice Islam in the west seems to be when it does not interfere with what everybody else does. Since when has that become the way Islam is being practiced in the west. We have to be people that hold fast to our Islamic values and Islamic identity. Just because they are different than the west does not mean we have to let them go. We have to defend, but not be defensive, but stand and speak the truth. It means being friendly, being peaceful, showing true Islam. It means showing the true peaceful image of Islam."*[44]

The 'show 'True' Islam' discourse is firmly rooted in beliefs about religious duties. Being a 'good' Muslim is not only mentioned as a way of promoting a better image of Islam and Muslims, but is also considered to be a religious duty in itself. To do 'good' just to improve an image is seen as having insincere intentions:

> *"We get involved to bring about good in society, not because we want to give off a good image of Islam, not because we want a Kodak moment. Muslims should be at the forefront of every positive good of society. When they are at the forefront of that good, the greater community will know who you are. And they will ask why you are doing these things. And then you will say 'this is who I am, this is what my religions teaches me'. You are not doing it for the PR moment. But when you are doing it, Allah will bless you with acceptance."*
> (Sheikh Yasser Qadi)[45]

While the counterdiscourse of 'showing 'True' Islam' is widely spread amongst my informants, so is its criticism. At the core of this criticism is the argument that talk of 'showing 'True' Islam' implies that Muslims are somehow to blame for Islamophobia. Reza Kazim from the Islamic Human Rights Commission articulates this misunderstanding as follows:

> *"I think there is an issue around understanding what our obligations are. We sometimes fall into the trap of the idea that somehow if we practice the ideal form of Islam, then somehow these problems and perceptions of people who are promoting Muslim hatred, that they will go away. It will not go away. This simply will not happen."*[46]

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[44] During a panel discussion as part of the event 'Je Suis Muslim: a workshop on grassroots mobilization against Islamophobia' on 28 February 2015, at a community centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.
[45] In his lecture during MEND's 'Islam in Britain' conference on 5 April 2015 in Birmingham.
[46] During a panel discussion as part of the event 'Je Suis Muslim: a workshop on grassroots mobilization against Islamophobia' on 28 February 2015, at a community centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.

Another critique of the 'showing 'True' Islam' narrative argues that overcompensating through showing 'True' Islam and being more active in communities in response to Islamophobia, is effectively victim blaming. This point is well illustrated by Syeda:

> "I think when we talk about showing true Islam, we actually reinforce this moderate extremist binary. What we are saying is: we are the moderate Muslims, we are following the real Islam, the extremist are not following the real Islam. They are following a deviant notion of Islam, and look at us this is what we are doing as good moderate British Muslims. I think we need to challenge that thinking." [47]

As Syeda describes here, the narrative of 'showing 'True' Islam' promotes a boundary narrower than that which surrounds Muslims as one group: it differentiates between 'True' and deviant Muslims. According to Wimmer, boundary contraction "*means drawing narrower boundaries and thus disidentifying with the category one is assigned to by outsiders. ... Contraction may be achieved through fission – splitting the existing category in two.*" (Wimmer 2008b: 1036)

According to Wimmer, fission is often a strategy to disidentify from the original, encompassing group. Wimmer uses the example of pre-civil rights movement African-American elite clubs who divided the 'Black' category into lighter and darker skinned 'Blacks', the former category discriminating against the latter. This way the stigma of Blackness is passed down to those with darker skin (Wimmer 2008b: 1037). A similar process appears to take place within the narrative of 'showing 'True' Islam': in order to avoid the stigma associated with being Muslim, 'True' Muslims are contrasted against those following a deviant version of Islam.

Counterdiscourse 2: The fight against white supremacy

Building upon the criticisms of the 'showing 'True' Islam' narrative – that the burden to solve Islamophobia does not lay with Muslims, the second counterdiscourse I observed within my data propagates the fight against white supremacy as the only solution to a climate of Islamophobia. As a boundary-making strategy, the fight against white supremacy was not mentioned often, explicit or implicit. However, white supremacy was regularly mentioned when going into discussions with informants about the deeper underlying causes of Islamophobia. In both events as well as in interviews, people referred to or quoted Malcom X in order to describe the situation of Muslims in Britain. Kiran's analysis of the underlying causes of Islamophobia is illustrative of this second counterdiscourse:

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[47] Author's interview, conducted on 19 April 2015 in Birmingham.

"I have been listening to Malcom X a lot as well. But he is really right in the sense that, the system is not made for us in essence: we will always be a minority in this country. We need to look after our own communities, because nobody else is. I don't think there is [a cure for Islamophobia]. The white man has to decide. It irritates me. He is eventually going to decide when it ends. Because he is in control of everything at the moment. I don't like to accept that I don't have any power over my own life, which I know I don't. I think I do. But I'd be stuck in the same society. It's institutional. We need to get rid of these institutions, these institutions weren't made for us. Islamophobia, there is an agenda behind that. We are not in charge of that agenda. To exploit our people."[48]

Kiran here frames the problems she experiences with Islamophobia in the wider struggle of ethnic minorities, or non-whites, in Britain. This resonates with Amna's argumentation for why she cannot openly criticize Britain:

"Based on the fact that I'm Pakistani and my skin color isn't white I think I would face criticism because I think my views would be seen as a bit radical. So I think if I was a white Muslim, it would be fine to call out that white privilege. But because of my color it affects the way my views are taken."[49]

Amna's argument reflects a sentiment I noticed amongst many people I spoke to about Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims: that it eventually all comes down to skin-color racism. The motor behind this racism is then found in white supremacy, and British institutions and mainstream society as oppressive of ethnic 'others'. In this view, British born (Pakistani) Muslims are left with no other choice but to use civil disobedience against the oppressive structures. Reza Kazim from the Islamic Human Rights Commission explains this rationale as follows:

"I will refer back to this idea of otherization, and creating communities which will feed into the narrative of white supremacy. 'Othering' is part of how the U.K. state functions. And one of the things that it is trying to do is that if you have resistance against the suppression, it wants to suppress that idea that you can have resistance against suppression, it wants to dilute the form that that resistance is going to take. Forget legislation, this is about campaigning." [50]

The counterdiscourse of 'the fight against white supremacy' avoids the minority stigma by reframing the national majority as oppressors, reversing the hierarchy between them. This fits with Wimmer's description of boundary-making strategies aimed at transvaluation:

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[48] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[49] Author's interview, conducted on 27 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[50] During a panel discussion as part of the event 'Je Suis Muslim: a workshop on grassroots mobilization against Islamophobia' on 28 February 2015, at a community centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.

"Transvaluation strategies try to re-interpret or change the normative principles of stratified ethnic systems…" (Wimmer 2008b: 1037)

Wimmer distinguishes between normative inversion – reversion of the symbolic hierarchy by redefining the excluded as a chosen people, superior to the dominant group, and equalization – aimed at challenging the hierarchal ordering of categories in order to attain moral and political equality. 'The fight against white supremacy' counterdiscourse does not necessarily redefine Muslims as a chosen people superior to the national majority, but it does demonize the dominant majority as oppressors, while reinterpreting Muslims as an oppressed community. This second counterdiscourse can therefore be classified as transvaluation aimed at equalization.

Counterdiscourse 3: A 'British Muslim' generation

The third and final counterdiscourse that I came across during my field work, is that of a 'British Muslim' generation. Putting the words 'British Muslim' together functions as a way to denote the narrative of a young generation who by simply living their life, refute the moderate/ extremist divide and subsequent incompatibility of being conservative Muslim and being British. According to Zain, being 'British Muslim' is exactly about the invalidation of this incompatibility:

> *"British Muslim right now means taking on something new. I think this is a really important generation right now. Being British Muslim is about fighting for the recognition of being British and being Muslim at the same time. It's no longer about, being OK we don't like your values, go back to where you came from. It's no longer about that, it's about recognizing you could still be Muslim, but you can also be from this country, hold the values. So being British Muslim is all about choosing your identity."[51]*

Zain touches upon a key argument in the 'British Muslim' narrative: the idea that Islamic values can easily be combined with British values. Indeed, proponents of the 'British Muslim' counterdiscourse would argue that despite popular beliefs, Islamic values and British values are not just compatible, they even partially overlap. This is illustrated by Naeem's remarks on 'British' values:

> *"People are always going on about 'Muslims and the religion is not compatible with British values, it's some old world idea and the laws are really backward' and this and that. But what they don't understand is how familiar it already is."[52]*

Naeem's quote does not suggest, however, that informants believed that Islamic values and 'British' values were exactly the same. As it was beautifully put by Dr. Jamal Badawi: *"Islamic*

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[51] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.
[52] Author's interview, conducted on 06 April 2015 in Birmingham.

values and western values might not be identical, but that does not mean they are not compatible."[53] The counterdiscourse of a 'British Muslim' generation is therefore all about arguing the similarity between 'British' and Islamic values and ways of life. Within this counterdiscourse, 'British' values are not seen as exclusionary towards Muslims. In fact, proponents of the 'British Muslim' generation narrative argue that since in essence 'British' and Islamic values overlap, the promotion of and emphasis on 'British' values is a good for thing for both broader society as well as Muslims themselves. Wahid Anwar, the branch coordinator of the Islamic Society of Britain in Birmingham explains how in this view, the promotion of 'British' values is encouraged. Moreover, in this view 'being British' is something to be proud of without having to compromise your religious beliefs:

> *"Islam is about British values; justice, fairness you know, there is nothing conflicting. I agree one hundred percent we should promote British values because it means exactly promoting what Islam believes in: justice, equality, fairness. These are things that are as much part of Islam as are British values. So I couldn't agree more. We should be proud to be British."*[54]

In this third counterdiscourse the importance of the boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims, or that between 'moderate' Muslims and extreme Muslims, is reduced. Instead, commonalities and similarities between British and Muslim lifestyles are emphasized. Wimmer defines the strategy of boundary blurring as the promotion of non-ethnic boundaries with the aim to delegitimize ethnic, national, or ethno somatic boundaries as principles of categorization and social organization, often in the form of emphasizing the local or global community (Wimmer 2008b: 1041). Within the 'British Muslim generation' counterdiscourse, the boundary that hinders Muslims from being accepted and seen as belonging to British national identity is indeed being delegitimized.

However, instead of a local or global community, the national community of British citizens is emphasized. 'Britishness' is over emphasized, thus adhering to the requirement of 'proving' one's Britishness. Therefore this narrative can also be viewed as another form of assimilation. This is well put by Kiran, who explains how explicitly identifying as British Muslims comes across to her as if there is something to justify:

> *"I can't help but think that in their mind they have to justify it, I have no problem with people saying they are Muslim, you can be British as well, you don't have to state that fact. Or you can just say you are British. You don't necessarily have to put them together. I feel*

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[53] During his lecture 'Muslims in the west: where are we heading?' on 25 March 2015, at Aston University, Birmingham.
[54] Author's interview, conducted on 11 March 2015 in Birmingham.

like people when they say it they try to justify it, they try to make a neutral image of being both British and Muslim or have an equal weight."[55]

Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: The reoccurrence of the moderate/ extremist divide

The disagreement about the message that is conveyed by putting the adjective 'British' to 'Muslim' points to a commonality between all boundary-making practices discussed in this chapter: they are all continuously negotiated and contested. Not only did my informants feel pressured by their 'outside' environment to portray themselves as 'moderate', the different counterdiscourses and their critiques also point towards expectations from 'within' Muslim communities about how my informants should portray themselves.

Moreover, it seems as if using the label 'British Muslim' reinforces the idea that there are 'good' Muslims – 'British' Muslims, and 'bad' Muslims – those who are not 'British'. The 'British Muslim generation' narrative therefore carries in it the risk of not countering, but reinforcing the moderate/ extremist divide and subsequent push for 'moderateness'. With the exception of the 'fight against white supremacy' counterdiscourse, the tendency to contrast 'good' Muslims against 'bad' Muslims can be found in all other boundary-making work discussed in this chapter. Status change through (passive) assimilation reinforces the overall hierarchy, and the counterdiscourse of 'showing 'True' Islam' categorizes Muslims who follow 'True' Islam as 'good' by arguing 'bad' Muslims follow a deviant version of Islam.

In the final chapter I will analyze what these findings mean for counter hegemonic boundary-work and the formation of counterdiscourses, and answer the main question posed in the introduction.

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[55] Author's interview, conducted on 30 March 2015 in Birmingham.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the different ways in which British born Pakistani Muslims seek acceptance into the British national community of belonging. Through the lens of Wimmer's ethnic boundary-making model, I sought to uncover the relationship between restrictive elements in the social field and the formation of counterdiscourses. In order to answer the question 'How do British born Muslims of Pakistani heritage strategically negotiate boundaries of British national identity under rising Islamophobia, in Birmingham, since 7/7?', two areas for investigation were identified: I collected data on how outside categorizations were experienced, as well as on the different boundary-making strategies that were employed in response to these categorizations.

The first empirical chapter explored factors in the social field which my informants felt restricted them in their belonging to British national identity. Informants felt stigmatized as potential terrorists, an emphasis on 'British' values left them excluded from the national 'us', and they experienced a push for moderateness both from within, and outside their communities. Together these restrictive factors led to a strict moderate/ extremist divide, contributing to the categorization of my informants as 'other', incompatible with belonging to British national identity. As a consequence, informants felt they had to prove their innocence, Britishness, and moderateness.

The second empirical chapter then explored which boundary-making strategies were employed to counter this exclusionary hegemonic boundary between 'us' and 'them'. The most direct way of diverting the 'extremist' stigma consisted of aiming for moderateness through direct assimilation or passive self-censorship. The counterdiscourse of 'showing 'True' Islam' aimed at boundary contraction by differentiating between 'good' Muslims who practice 'true' Islam and 'bad' Muslims who follow a deviant version of Islam. In the 'fight against white supremacy' counterdiscourse, transvaluation strategies were employed reverse the hierarchy between 'us' and 'them'. Finally, the 'British Muslim generation' counterdiscourse was both perceived as a case of boundary blurring, as well as critiqued as indirect, subconscious assimilation. All boundary-making work that I observed in response to the hegemonic moderate/ extremist divide, with the exception of the 'fight against white supremacy' counterdiscourse, entailed some version of contrasting 'good' Muslims against 'bad' Muslims. This demarcation was employed to shift the stigma associated with being Muslim down to the latter category.

It appears then as if the hegemonic boundary between 'us' (white British mainstream culture) and 'them' (British Muslims) is policed through the moderate/ extremist divide and related emphasis on 'British' values. As was pointed out by Yuval-Davis, actors often employ particular requirements a person needs to meet to be entitled to belong to the collectivity. The predominant requirement as abstracted from this case study consists of adhering to 'British' values and thus falling into the 'moderate' category. The requirement of adhering to a set of 'common' values may portray the boundary as relatively permeable. However, as shown through my study, 'British' values were experienced as exclusionary towards Muslims. This study therefore confirms Yuval-Davis argument that when 'common' values are associated with a particular national community – here the national majority in Britain, they signify not a permeable, but an exclusionary boundary.

As was pointed out by Wimmer, dominant groups often police their boundary against trespassers. The power to police the boundaries of the nation lies with the national majority, because of its privileged relationship to the state. According to Wimmer, minority members who have difficulties being accepted as part of the national community of belonging may attempt to acquire those characteristics that signal full membership. In their counterdiscourses, informants tended to comply to the requirement of being 'moderate', either by direct assimilation or by distancing themselves from those deemed 'extreme'. Through their boundary-making work my informants thus reified the moderate/ extremist divide. Through the process of reification a social construct becomes perceived and experienced as an actual 'thing'. Those who are working to battle discrimination are particularly susceptible to reification. This process is indeed found in the counter hegemonic boundary-making practices by anti-Islamophobia activists in my sample. By structuring their boundary-work along the lines of the moderate/ extremist divide, the belief that this distinction is absolute is reinforced. My informants thus reified the moderate/ extremist divide through their boundary-making strategies.

The occurrence of a moderate/ extremist divide in both hegemonic boundary-making work as well as in the counterdiscourses it evokes, points towards a consensus over the location of this boundary. This consensus reflects a particular constellation of power: the power to define 'moderate' and 'extreme' lies with the national majority. In this case, such a partial or asymmetrical consensus limits the range of possibilities within which actors can argue their search for power and recognition. Hence, the moderate/ extremist divide fits Wimmer's definition of a cultural compromise.

In the case-study central to this research, such a cultural compromise (or a sever asymmetrical consensus) appears to result in a form of determinism. Even in supposedly counter hegemonic boundary-making work, the main parameter of the social field – the moderate/ extremist divide – is reinforced and reified. Adhering to the parameters of the social field seems to be inevitable for my informants. In reply to Jenkins who criticized Wimmer's model for this determinism, Wimmer asserts that his model leaves enough room for change through for example new actors or resources appearing on the scene or the existence of social movements. Yet, my findings suggest that such change is extremely hard to realize in a national majority/ minority scenario in which power and resources are distributed particularly unequal. Indeed, in the case of anti-Islamophobia activists in Birmingham, the process of forming counterdiscourses against hegemonic boundaries may be better captured by Althusser's interpellation theory. In Althusserian theory, actors (at least partially) rely on or point back to the dominant discourse by which they are interpellated: they 'talk back'. This interpretation of the formation of counterdiscourses diverts from the structurationist assumption underlying Wimmer's model. According to structuration theory, social realities come into being through an interplay between agency and structure. Yet, as my findings show, certain actors have more power to impose their view and definition of social reality. Wimmer's model could therefore benefit from a deeper exploration of the influence of severe power imbalances on the formation of counterdiscourses and the occurrence of asymmetrical boundary consensus, for example through the incorporation of the 'interpellation' effect.

As was shown through my data, this effect complicates the formation of a truly counter hegemonic discourse. It thus hinders effective challenging of a climate of Islamophobia. Nonetheless, both my findings and the literature indicate a way out of this apparent structuralist determinism. Anti-Islamophobia activists propagating 'the fight against white supremacy' counterdiscourse may be described as what Althusser calls 'bad subjects': they challenge the submission to the dominant narrative. The development of 'bad subjects' who challenge the moderate/ extremist divide and aim to negotiate their belonging to British national identity on their own terms, may offer a way out of the current exclusionary Islamophobic climate. As Bracke asserts, 'bad subjects' often provoke state repression. This could explain why these kind of voices are more scarce and thus harder to find than those narratives that are structured along the lines of the parameters of the social field.

Having summarized the findings of this study and reflected on their social and theoretical implications, we can now answer the main question. In the aftermath of 7/7, a strict moderate/

extremist divide limits my informants' maneuver room to be accepted as British on their own terms. *In this climate, the boundaries of British national identity are strategically negotiated by employing boundary-making practices that are structured according to the parameters set in the social field.* These boundary-making practices reinforce and reify the moderate/ extremist divide, by referring back to the dominant narrative by which they are interpellated. This particular characteristic of the negotiation process over the boundaries of British national identity complicates the formation of future counterdiscourses and hinders effective battling of Islamophobia.

Further Research

First of all, I employed a case-study method to arrive at this answer. As was discussed in the introduction, the selection of this method bears implications for the generalizability of my findings. The vast majority of my informants are university educated and highly politicized. Even though I believe I have captured quite accurate the range of counterdiscourses found amongst anti-Islamophobia activists in Birmingham, it is debatable if their boundary-work is in any way representative of sentiments in wider British (Pakistani) Muslim communities. While my informants may disagree on the appropriate method, the findings of this study suggest they stand as one bloc against Islamophobia. However, we should be cautious about essentializing and homogenizing the anti-Islamophobia community in Birmingham. I did not take into account inter-Muslim differences based on for example sect, class, or ethnic identifications. Indeed, this study did not aim to generalize beyond the particularity of the case-study. However, an understanding of the formation of counterdiscourses under Islamophobia is aided by a distinction between processes and mechanisms that are case specific and those which are found across cases. In order to arrive at this differentiation, multi-sited, comparative research based on a maximum diversity sample is necessary.

Secondly, it was beyond the scope and time of this study to gather data on the elements and workings of the social field beyond the experiences and perceptions of my informants. My findings do suggest, however, that the characteristics of the social field – in particular institutional rules and measures such as counter extremism legislation – are of key importance to the boundary-making practices of British Muslims. Further research into the role of institutions in creating and sustaining the moderate/extremist divide is needed, as well as research into institutional Islamophobia in general.

Thirdly, my findings imply a system of conditional citizenship for Muslims. While I cannot substantiate this claim with data from my study, it appears as if the limiting parameters discussed in this study are keeping British Muslims from partaking in society as full and equal citizens. The

exclusionary effect of an emphasis on liberal, 'common' values is particularly interesting in this regard. Further research into the existence a system of conditional or second class citizenship may provide insights into the relationship between state practices, belonging, cultural racism, and the 'trap' of a moderate/ extremist divide.

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