UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

MUSLIM WOMEN AND THE HIJAB
IN BRITAIN:
CONTEXTS AND CHOICES.

Kathryn Mary Mackay

Doctor of Philosophy 2013
## Chapter One: Religious and political context

1.1. Introduction 13
1.2. The Qur’anic basis of the *hijab* 15
1.3. The World Trade Centre attacks September 11th 2001 (9/11) 18
1.4. The War on Terror 20
1.5. The Iraq War 2003 20
1.6. The *hijab* in French state schools 22
1.7. The London Bombings 7th July 2005 (7/7) 26
1.8. The Jack Straw Controversy 27
1.9. Summary 31

## Chapter Two: Literature review.

2.1. Introduction 33
2.2. Interpretation of Qur’anic instructions 34
2.3. Feminist arguments/interpretations against veiling 38
2.4. Restrictions on mixing with the opposite sex 44
2.5. Politics of the veil 46
2.6. Empirical research on the *hijab* in the West prior to 9/11 49
2.7. Impact of 9/11 54
2.8. Conversion 61
2.9. Dress and identity 62
2.10. Veiling as fashion 67
2.11. Summary 73
## Chapter Three: Religion and Choice

3.1. Introduction
3.2. Rational Choice Theory
3.3. Rational Choice Theory and Religion
3.4. Rational Choice Theory and Social Constraints
3.5. Family
3.6. Lifestyle choices
3.7. Habitus
3.8. Individualization
3.9. The individualization thesis debate
3.10. Summary

## Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1. Introduction
4.2. Feminist research
4.3. Epistemology
4.4. My feminist and epistemological stance
4.5. Positionality as a female researcher
4.6. Methodology
4.7. Methods
  4.7.1. Sampling
  4.7.2. Access
  4.7.3. Interviews
  4.7.4. Data Analysis
  4.7.5. Ethical considerations
  4.7.6. The dress of the interviewer
  4.7.7. Language
4.8. Generalizability and validity
4.9. Summary
Chapter Five: Findings

5.1. Introduction 141
5.2. Life story so far 142
5.3. Back to the beginning 144
5.4. Daily routine 150
5.5. Rules regarding the hijab 152
5.6. Responses to the hijab 159
5.7. Changes to the use of hijab 166
5.8. Background information 172
5.9. Summary 176

Chapter Six: Themes

6.1. Introduction 179
6.2. Religion/religious community 179
6.3. Education 188
6.4. Family and friends 192
6.5. Clothing industry/fashion 201
6.6. 9/11 208
6.7. Cross-cutting themes 213
6.8. Summary 215

Chapter Seven: Analysis and discussion

7.1. Introduction 217
7.2. Costs and benefits and the Religious Human Capital approach 218
7.3. Rational Choice Theory and Social Constraints 227
7.4. Family 232
7.5. Lifestyle choices 236
7.6. Habitus 240
7.7. Individualization 242
7.8. The individualization thesis debate 243
7.9. Summary 244
7.10 Conclusion 248
References 251

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Sample table – phase 1 263

Appendix 2 - Agenda for semi-structured interviews 265
Glossary

aya A verse of the Qur’an.

burqa A covering of the whole body including the face.

dupatta A loose headscarf often worn with a shalwar kameez.

Hadith (pl.ahadith) The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

hijab The fixed headscarf worn by Muslim women.

iftar The meal that is eaten after a day’s fasting during Ramadan.

ijithad Independent reasoning used to interpret the rules that are not always evident in the Qur’an.

Imam A religious leader or teacher of Islam.

jahiliyya The time in Arabia before Islam.

jilbab A cloak or long gown.

khimar A loose scarf worn by women at the time of Muhammad.

mahrem Relatives who you are not allowed to marry.

maqramas Black netted headscarves.

munafiqun Hypocrites.

neo-ijtihad A new interpretation of the rules in the Qur’an carried out by the women themselves.

niqab The face veil.

sari A long piece of cloth that is wound around the body to make a dress and is usually worn with a fitted top and a petticoat. Part of the cloth is often used to cover the head.

shalwar kameez A suit consisting of loose trousers and long shirt or dress.

Shi’a Muslims who believe Ali, the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law, to be his rightful heir.

Sunnah The actions and behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sunni The mainstream sect of Islam.

surah A chapter of the Qur’an.
**tafsir**  Commentary on the Qur’an.

**Umma**  The Muslim community
Preface

I carried out all of the research and work for this investigation and I am responsible for all of the different sections of the submitted thesis.
Abstract

This thesis concerns the contexts and choices associated with the wearing of the hijab in Britain, beginning with the impact of events such as 9/11. For many in the West, the hijab has become perceived as a symbol of Islam and as a result hijab wearing women who were living in Britain were identified as being connected with those who had carried out the 9/11 attacks in the United States. There was evidence from this research that there was an increase in first time hijab wearing, particularly in those between the ages of 25-39, however, 9/11 had not been directly responsible for this increase, but the higher profile of Islam due to the attacks had encouraged the women to find out about the religion for themselves and the rulings that related to them. Sales of the hijab have increased along with a more defined Islamic fashion consciousness and a desire by the women to wear what they regard as Islamic dress.

This feminist standpoint research, although carried out by a white, non-Muslim from a middle-class background gave the women the opportunity to talk about their lives and explain the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab. A number of related themes were identified: Religion/religious community; Education; Family and friends; Clothing industry/fashion; and 9/11, although the thread that ran through all of these themes was the notion of choice. The women described wearing or not wearing hijab as their choice, although some had more influence from others. When choice theory was examined in relation to the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab it could be seen that although rational choice theory, lifestyle choices, family, habitus and individualization could tell us something about why the women made the choices they did, it was the interplay between individualization and tradition that gave the most accurate explanation as to why these women were making their choices.

These theories did not tell the whole story however, and the conclusion discusses a reinterpretation of the Islamic teachings occurring in Britain with the women interpreting the Qur’an and the religious texts for themselves before arriving at their own conclusions as to what they should be wearing. This reinterpretation is driving the changes in behaviour for many Muslim women in Britain.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to all of the women who cannot be named, but who were interviewed as part of this research, and to all of those who acted as gatekeepers.

A sincere thanks to: The Fatima Women’s Association; The Westwood and Coldhurst Women’s Association; The Brighton and Hove Muslim Women’s Group; and The Tunbridge Wells Mosque for their kindness in allowing me to visit and interview some of their members.

I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Paul Weller and Dr Kristin Aune for their advice and encouragement in the completion of this thesis.

A special thank you to my husband Chris, and my children Isabelle and Owen, as I could not have done this without your support.
Chapter One: Religious and political context

1.1. Introduction

The wearing of the *hijab* (all Islamic terms are to be found in the glossary) and other forms of Islamic dress have become a much discussed and controversial issue since recent world events including the destruction of the World Trade Centre on the 11th September 2001, the Iraq conflict in 2003 and the London bombings on the 7th July 2005. Furthermore, at the end of 2003, and the beginning of 2004, the world was witness to French legislation banning the wearing of the *hijab* in certain spheres and the discussion and debate that subsequently surrounded it.

This research originally set out to identify any changes that may have occurred in the dress of Muslim women living in Britain in light of 9/11, and the other key events that followed, by exploring the social context and explanations relating to the *hijab*. This study focuses on the wearing of the *hijab*, and throughout, looks at the reasons why Muslim women in the West, and particularly those who live in Britain choose to cover or not cover their heads. It examines the impact that the above mentioned, major global events may have had on the views and behaviour of some Muslims, and documents any changes that these women may have made to their dress. At the time of the interviews, 9/11 was a very recent event and the debate surrounding the wearing of the *hijab* was in its infancy, however, it was discovered that this one event had immediate implications for Muslims in Britain, specifically women.

Until 9/11 being a Muslim in Britain and wearing the *hijab* was a topic that few people were interested in. A study of this nature would have attracted little academic interest and although the reasons why Muslim women wear the *hijab* were important to those within the communities in which they lived, those outside of the religion saw little need to research these reasons. The women interviewed at this time were indeed surprised to be asked about this subject, although, they did express a desire to talk about their reasons for the wearing of the *hijab* and were pleased that a non-Muslim Western woman was interested in their lives and their religion.
Since 9/11 and the interviews carried out for this research the interest in Islam in the media and within the population of Britain as a whole has increased significantly. As a teacher of Religious Studies when Islam is mentioned in the classroom, the pupils frequently repeat many of the negative stereotypes that have been reported in the British press. Many pupils seem to believe that all Muslims are terrorists and during a classroom discussion recently a pupil explained to the rest of the class how Muslim women are forced to wear the *hijab* by their husbands and fathers. The idea that Muslim women are forced to wear the *hijab* by their husbands is still prevalent not only in the classroom, but in homes in many areas of the country. There are those who still believe that these women are oppressed and if given the chance would immediately remove their scarves and be free from this restriction.

It is often easy for those without any contact with Muslims to believe what is reported and therefore, research of this nature is vital to expose those stereotypes and to help with social cohesion in areas of the country where few Muslims live and contact with anyone of a religious faith other than Christianity is non-existent. For anyone reading the results of this research it would soon become clear that the women are not forced into wearing the *hijab*, but take into consideration many factors before they take, for some, the difficult decision of putting on the headscarf and mixing with members of the public in Britain. These narratives provided by the women expose the wearing of the *hijab* to be a complex issue.

I was welcomed by the women to gain a snapshot of their lives and to explore their reasons for wearing the *hijab*. Throughout the interviews, truth and honesty were the key factors and by implementing these, the women appeared relaxed to talk freely about the wearing of the *hijab* in the past and since the events of 9/11. This relaxed atmosphere was also imperative to enable the conversations to flow and not just be a set of questions and answers. To delve deeply into the lives of the women being open and honest as an interviewer and making clear the objectives at the outset was a very successful way to achieve this. Thus the narratives gathered for this study show a fascinating insight into the lives of Muslim women living in Britain and expose the processes that the women themselves implement when deciding which style of covering to wear or not wear. However, before any of these issues can be discussed
and conclusions reached, it is important to examine why the women cover their heads with the *hijab*, and look at the religious, ideological and social contexts for this.

1.2. The Qur’anic basis of the *hijab*

When the Qur’an is quoted in this thesis it is the translation by Ali (1975) that has been used. *Surah* (24:31) of the Qur’an, the Muslim holy book, for many Muslims, is used as the basis for the wearing of the *hijab*. They believe that women should dress modestly, and refer to these instructions that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

> And say to the believing women That they should lower Their gaze and guard Their modesty; that they Should not display their Beauty and ornaments except Thereof; that they should Draw their veils over Their bosoms and not display Their beauty except To their husbands, their fathers, .....

(Qur'an 24:31)

These revelations about women’s dress and deportment came at a time known as *jahiliyya* when women were in danger from men. During the time of *jahiliyya* women were seen as objects of desire and availability with no value. Prostitutes were openly available, and, as all of these women dressed in a similar fashion it was impossible to distinguish between the prostitutes and the believers. Thus the revelations relating to the covering of women came at a time when differentiation was needed to distinguish who were the pious and who were not. Muhammad received the first revelation instructing Muslim women to veil when he was still in Mecca. He received a second revelation when he was in Medina on the subject of modesty and the way that a Muslim woman should dress, and it was at this time that it gained widespread acceptance.
Prophet! Tell
Thy wives and daughters,
And the believing women,
That they should cast
Their outer garments over
Their persons (when abroad):
That is most convenient,
That they should be known
(As such) and not molested.
And God is Oft-Forgiving,
Most Merciful.

(Qur'an 33:59)

Muhammad realised that even his own wives were not safe from this harassment, and according to Mernissi (1991, p.105), a Muslim feminist writer and sociologist, his enemies whom he called ‘munafiqun, because they rarely attacked directly but preferred to use slander, rumor [sic], and other even more insidious tactics, …’ forced the Prophet to make sure that his wives were covered when they went out into the street and ‘accept the famous hijab’ (Mernissi, 1991, p.106). By enforcing the commandments of Allah already revealed whilst in Mecca, and introducing these new ones received in Medina, Muhammad was able to put forward a solution to protect the Muslim women and his wives from these unwanted advances. According to Al-Qaradawi (2003, p.145), an Islamic theologian, ‘her appearance would make it clear to everyone that she is a chaste, believing woman, no lecher or hypocrite would dare to molest her’. By covering up, the women were showing that they were followers of Islam and these instructions were intended to protect women from danger. They could then leave the house and go about their day-to-day business.

Although these instructions date back to Muhammad, veiling in this area of Arabia pre-dates Islam and it would not have been unusual to see women covering themselves at this time. According to the anthropologist, El Guindi (2000, p.149) in pre-Islamic Arabia before the revelations of Muhammad, veils were already worn by differing groups of women and were sometimes used to identify the wearer as belonging to a certain class.
According to the revelations in the Qur’an, these rules must be followed as soon as a Muslim woman reaches puberty. They should be carried out throughout her life until a woman ceases to be attractive to the opposite sex, then she may then go out without her outer garment, but is still required to dress modestly.

Such elderly women as are
Past the prospect of marriage,-
There is no blame on them
If they lay aside
Their (outer) garments, provided
They make not a wanton display
Of their beauty; but
It is best for them
To be modest; and God
Is One Who sees and knows
All things.

(Qur’an 24:60)

Other instructions pertaining to dress can also be found documented in the Hadith and the Sunnah and although many look to the Qur’an for divine guidance and see it as the basis for the way many women dress today, some believe that it was the Hadith that revealed the true teachings of the Prophet. According to Parker (1998):

The practice of hijab among Muslim women is one based on religious doctrine, although the Qur’an does not mandate it. Instead, it comes from the Hadith of Sahih Bukhari. The Hadith, the “tradition of Mohammed,” reveals the teachings of the Prophet to believers. Bukhari’s version of this text is generally regarded as the standard one, although numerous versions exist.

(Parker, 1998)

Therefore, for many, the reasons for the wearing of the hijab go back to the revelations from Allah and the doctrine that came from them. Once these reasons are understood, it is then possible to relate them to modern Britain and to look at how the wearing of the hijab may or not be affected by these world events.
1.3. The World Trade Centre attacks 11th September 2001 (9/11)

Since this study was first proposed and commenced the events of 9/11 have had a global impact on the perception of Islam and the experience of Muslim women.

On the morning of 9/11 in the U.S.A., beginning at 0838 Eastern Daylight Time, four planes were hijacked, two of which were flown into the World Trade Centre, one into the Pentagon and one was crashed by the passengers into a field. As a result of these impacts, and with the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre collapsing, 2976 lost their lives and thousands more were left injured. For many these attacks on the World Trade Centre or the Twin Towers, as they were also known, seemed to be totally unexpected, but in truth this was the second attempt on the World Trade Centre as a bomb had been left in the underground car park in February 1993, and although it had exploded, it had failed to cause the towers to collapse.

According to academics such as Roberts (2002) and Freedman (2002), these attacks were the culmination of years of interference by the United States government in other countries around the world and the oppression experienced by some followers of Islam. These acts of terrorism, according to Roberts (2002), had been occurring on a minor level for many years, but the bombings on 9/11 he claimed, showed that there were now no limits to what some groups were prepared to do. Freedman (2002) sees the build up to the events of 9/11 starting on the 23rd of October 1983 when two suicide bombers in Beirut attacked the US and French military that were stationed there. In Freedman’s (2002) opinion, it was not only that the U. S. forces were stationed in Beirut in 1983 that started these attacks. They were also caught up in Lebanon’s civil war, held stations in Somalia in 1993, involved themselves using air power in Kosovo in 1999, and they have had a presence in Saudi Arabia since 1990 to name but a few examples. It was believed to be this final incursion into the land of the Prophet that contains Mecca and Medina, which angered the soon to be infamous Osama bin Laden. According to Freedman (2002) ‘Bin Laden saw this as a desecration of Islam’s holiest sites’.
Due to the fact that the Muslim group al-Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the attacks, this event that came to be known as 9/11, catapulted the religion of Islam onto the front pages of the newspapers around the world and into the headlines on every television news programme. In particular, the Muslim communities in Britain had the feeling that Islam was suddenly under scrutiny and in the spotlight. In *The Financial Times*, Guthrie and Jones (2001) reported ‘Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, leader of the Muslim Parliament, an Islamic lobbying organisation’, as saying: ‘This will have a negative impact on the perception of Islam, even though British Muslims will be very upset and angry at the loss of human life’.

And, as the Muslim population of Britain were coming to terms with what had happened in the United States, some newspapers were reporting that the blame was immediately being placed on all Muslims by a minority section of the British population. Within hours of the events happening in the U.S.A. Muslims in Britain were being targeted. In *The Guardian* newspaper, Chrisafis (2001) reported how ‘a Muslim woman went to the doctor in Harrow, north London. “You Muslims have done this!” the receptionist said in front of a packed waiting room’. These attacks were predominantly on Muslim women, who wore the *hijab* and were therefore instantly identifiable as Muslims. The British press were also reporting that these attacks were not just verbal, but could have a physical and violent element to them. According to Chrisafis (2001) these included: a hammer attack on one woman; a little boy who was doused with pepper spray when out with his *hijab* wearing mother; a Muslim teacher who was asked if she thought she would live until 9pm that night; and two students who had had their headscarves ripped off. The article states that: ‘simply the sight of a woman wearing hijab or “looking Muslim” has provoked a vicious reaction’.

These attacks appeared to offer two scenarios for the *hijab* wearing women in Britain. They could either take off the *hijab* to avoid identification as Muslim women, or put on the *hijab* to make a stand and be visible as Muslims.
1.4. The War on Terror

The dust had not even settled from the collapse of the Twin Towers when George W. Bush, supported by Britain and other countries around the world declared the start of the War on Terror. As al-Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the attacks, the War on Terror initially focused on Afghanistan where Osama Bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda, was thought to be based. Reporting in The Independent, Cornwell (2003) explains that ‘within a couple of months the Taliban government had been overturned and the terrorist camps destroyed’. Even though the Taliban had been unseated, Osama Bin Laden still remained elusive and alive, often sending messages via video recordings to the West, threatening the U.S.A. with more attacks. It was at this point that the U.S. government turned its attention to Iraq or more significantly the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein who had been perceived to be a problem in the Middle East since the first Gulf War in 1991 when he sent his army in to Kuwait with the intention of annexing it to Iraq. Writing for the BBC, Sayyid (2002) states that:

> There are other voices who see a chain of equivalences so that Al-Qaeda = Taliban = Islamism = Islam. Among the ultra-conservative constituency that considers President Bush to be one of their own, you can hear calls for the ‘nuking of Mecca’, the occupation of Middle East oil fields, the transformation of the Muslim world on the pattern of post-1945 Germany and Japan. (Sayyid, 2002)

During this War on Terror attacks on hijab wearing women were continually being reported in The Muslim News in Britain, according to Adil (2003) ‘A 23-year-old Iraqi Muslim woman was subjected to a number of Islamophobic attacks in Buckland Estate, Portsmouth, Hampshire in the past one month. She was attacked because she was wearing a head scarf’.

1.5. The Iraq War 2003

The War on Terror continued with The Iraq War 2003 or the Second Gulf War as it is sometimes called. This attack was the culmination of a refusal by Saddam Hussein to rid his country of the alleged weapons of mass destruction or to put himself into exile. A report in The Independent by Usbourne (2003) explains how the invasion of Iraq began in the early hours of 20th March 2003 and ‘President George Bush took to the
airwaves to announce that the first stages of the battle for Iraq had begun.’

Controversy surrounded this bombing, as a United Nations resolution permitting this attack had not been passed and the United States had decided to start the battle before Saddam Hussein’s deadline had passed, in the attempt to take him by surprise. Many around the world opposed the bombings and the question ‘HOW DID [sic] it come to this, and so quickly?’ was asked by Cornwell (2003) just days before the offensive began. Cornwell (2003) explores the build up to the Iraq War and explains how the attacks on New York on 11th September 2001 gave the U.S. government or more accurately gave George W. Bush a reason to start the War on Terror and finish off what his father had started in 1991, by ‘going all of the way to Baghdad’.

According to Cornwell (2003) at the very first meeting between Tony Blair and George W. Bush in February 2001, pre-dating the 9/11 attacks, the threat of Saddam Hussein had already been discussed.

At this point, opposition to the proposed conflict was starting to grow around the world, but back in Britain Tony Blair was echoing the same opinions as George W. Bush. Even amongst growing opposition from his own political party, Tony Blair was agreeing openly with the statements made by the U.S. government that Saddam Hussein was a threat to the world and must be stopped. Reporting for The Independent, Grice (2003) states that: ‘Although no evidence of a direct link between Iraq and al-Qa’ida has been established, Mr Blair insisted the threats from President Saddam and international terrorism were “two halves of the same coin”’.

For many around the world this was starting to look more and more as if the War on Terror was in fact a War against Islam. Many citizens around the world, Muslims and non-Muslims collected together and held mass demonstrations in the towns and cities calling for an end to the Iraq war. So, how were Muslim women in Britain fairing after the Iraq War had started in earnest? Some believed that due to the opposition that the collective British public felt against the War, the hijab wearers would be safer in Britain than they were after 9/11. Carrell (2003) reports in The Independent that: ‘Muslim commentators believe it is unlikely that British Muslims will be subjected to the same level of hatred that followed the 11 September attacks’. However, Carrell (2003) in the same article includes a comment from The Muslim News that: ‘several
readers had reported being abused, including two Arab students in Dundee who were insulted, and a woman wearing the hijab who was spat at in Sutton, Surrey.’

It was at this stage that The Muslim News encouraged readers to write to the paper with their stories. Reports in relation to the wearing of the hijab included:

- Islamophobic attacks against an Iraqi Muslim woman (issue 170);
- Attack on Muslim woman not religiously motivated, say police (issue 174);
- Police accused of dismissing Islamophobic incident (issue 179);
- Kidnapped Muslim girl cut with a sign of cross (issue 180);
- Muslim woman slapped on face (issue 183);
- Keep out, Muslim learner driver told (issue 183);
- Iraqi woman attacked (issue 188);
- Islamophobic attack of Muslim woman (issue 192);
- Women targeted in racist attack (issue 193);
- Woman with niqab attacked on bus (issue 194).

They have also reported on numerous hijab related events such as:

- Muslim stopped from playing football because of hijab (issue 152);
- Muslim nurse sent home because of hijab (issue 154);
- Third girl suspended in Singapore for wearing hijab (issue 154);
- Hijab disallowed in a girls school (issue 155);
- Judo player barred because of hijab (issue 158);
- Can’t teach because of the hijab (issue 161);
- Muslims in niqab accused of fare-dodging (issue 165);
- German court rejects headscarf ban (issue 174);
- Teacher denies assault charge (issue 174);
- Luton school’s row over Hijab ban (issue 178);
- Teacher cleared of pulling student’s hijab (issue 179);
- Luton school allows hijab (issue 179);
- Germany to take French stance on hijab ban? (issue 179);
- British Muslims harassed at airports under terror laws (issue 183);
- In support of the hijab (issue 183);
- Turkey’s search for a modern identity (issue 185);
- Jilbab row continues (issue 187);
- French girl shaves head in protest at hijab ban (issue 188);
- Mother claims police forced her to remove niqab (issue 194).

1.6. The hijab in French state schools

The War on Terror continued, and at the same time discussions in France regarding the wearing of ‘ostentatious’ religious symbols in schools was beginning. As far back as 1989 the issue of Muslim girls wanting to wear the hijab or headscarf in state schools was causing concern for the French government. Reporting in The Observer, Godfrey (2003) explained how: ‘Two sisters and their cousin were expelled from their
school in a small town called Creil, just outside Paris, 14 years ago, for wearing Islamic headscarves in class’. According to Godfrey (2003) there were demonstrations by ‘fundamentalist groups’ and ‘television crews invaded the town’. Apparently the King of Morocco even joined in with calls for the girls to remove their headscarves. The article also reports how the left-wing government of the time issued a series of government circulars following the event, but the rules regarding the wearing of the hijab were confusing and were ultimately controlled by a secular ruling made in 1989. Reporting in The Guardian, Henley (2003) explains that ‘…it is not illegal to wear religious symbols in state schools’ and continues by saying that ‘…the law does forbid “ostentatious” religious signs that “constitute an act of pressure, provocation, proselytism, or propaganda”’. Then in 2003 with the increase in number of Muslims girls wearing the hijab in state schools in France, a group of MPs from the new centre-right government called for a ban on what they considered to be religious symbols in schools, including: the Jewish skull cap, any large Christian crucifixes and the Muslim hijab, the idea being that France was a secular state and that religion had no place in the state schools in France and was to be practised at home. According to Astier (2003) reporting for the BBC News, ‘Secularism is the closest thing the French have to a state religion. It underpinned the French revolution and has been a basic tenet of the country’s progressive thought since the 18th Century’.

During 2003 the debate raged as to whether the wearing of the headscarf in schools should be banned. As the French government was discussing the issue, simultaneously the Muslim citizens of France were showing their opposition to the proposed ban. According to Murphy (2003) the ‘campaigns to stop the state cracking down on the wearing of the headscarf are often run by young Muslim women confident of their right to fulfil their potential and their right to express their religion’. This opposition was being organised and controlled by the second and third generations of Muslim women in particular, who were against the idea of being told what they could and could not wear and who saw this as an attack on the Muslim faith.
However, Mr Jean-Pierre Raffarin who was part of the government commission was reported by the BBC News (2003) as stating at this time that the function of the ban was about protecting Muslim women and ‘lifting constraints on women’ who he saw as being pressured into wearing the headscarf by members of their families and often at the despair of the women. According to Wyatt (2003) French President Jacques Chirac was also seen to be lending his support to the ban and had commented that ‘there was something “aggressive” about the wearing of a headscarf’.

Therefore, the proposed ban opened up much debate about the reasoning behind it. It claimed to be for the sole purpose of making sure that young Muslims were integrating fully into French society and yet it was thought that the ban would further ghettoise the Muslim girls that it was aiming to help. An Iranian exile, Satrapi (2003), expressed her fears that once you say no to teenagers there can be a tendency for them to do the opposite, thus exacerbating the problem that you were trying to solve in the beginning. Satrapi (2003) was reported in The Guardian as saying that:

…when you are adolescent if you are told you cannot do something, you will surely do it. So it could become a fashion – worse, a symbol of rebellion. If wearing a veil becomes your symbol of rebellion, then you certainly know about irony! Scarily, these women might come to believe that they are asserting their freedom, not their oppression.

(Satrapi, 2003)

On the opposing side though, it was suggested that this ban would give hope and help to some of the Muslim women who had been debating the reasoning behind the wearing of the headscarf for many years. It would also give some of the women who had not had the rights to choose in the past, the choice to decide for themselves. Coulon (2003) reports Jean-Marie Colombani in le Monde as stating that the ‘law will also comfort those French Muslims fed up with being associated with an intolerant Islam’.

Even though the government was trying to find compromises, such as one suggestion made by the Interior Minister at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, of ‘replacing the Muslim headscarf with a bandana’ (Yahmed, 2003), the Muslim women of France and of many more countries around the world, including Britain, were taking to the streets to show their solidarity and opposition to what they saw as an attack on the religion of
Islam and Muslim women in particular. In Britain opposition to the ban was shown and even the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, added his voice to the growing discontent that was occurring. He decided to host a press conference to ‘defend Muslim women’ s rights to wear the hijab’ (Maher, 2004) and join with other Muslim groups in a show of strength before the final decision was made.

One journalist, Yahmed (2004) saw the issue as more than just keeping France secular. He believed that this ban on the wearing of the headscarf was in direct correlation to 9/11 and the ‘wave of Islamophobia’ that was taking place around the world. Yahmed (2004) reported that after 9/11 many in France came to the realisation that: ‘The people who belong to the same religion as Osama bin Laden surround Paris and occupy complete districts inside Paris and in several other French counties’.

Finally, Lichfield (2004a) reported that this new ruling ‘to ban all “ostensible” religious signs and forms of dress from state primary and secondary schools’ had been confirmed and would come into play at the start of the new term in September 2004. In an attempt to enforce the ban without much opposition, ideas on how the issue could be solved were put forward to the schools and the Muslim communities. One group that was formed after the French government brought in the ban was the Assembly for the Protection of Hijab, which according to Akhtar (2004) ‘promised to be the first step towards establishing an international alliance to protect religious freedom, particularly the Muslim woman’s right to wear hijab’. The aims of this group as listed on their website were as follows:

1. To bring an end to the Hijab ban wherever it has already been imposed.
2. To prevent the spread of the Hijab ban developing further.
3. To co-ordinate the various efforts being made to end or prevent the Hijab ban.
4. To provide a platform for Muslim women to express their views.
5. To expose and discourage any false stereotypes which present Muslim women as being oppressed.
6. To liberate Muslim women from any form of race, religious or sex discrimination whether it be state, institutional, organisational or individual discrimination.

(Assembly for the Protection of Hijab, 2004)
Then, as the opposition to the ban was still gaining followers, Ken Livingstone, in Britain, held a conference on the hijab. He was quoted by Majendie (2004) as saying: ‘The French ban is the most reactionary proposal to be considered by any parliament in Europe since the Second World War’.

The hijab ban in France also had wider implications. During the Iraq War, it was reported by the BBC News (2004a) that soldiers who were believed to be members of the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI) had taken two French journalists hostage. The condition of their safe release was that the French government should abolish the headscarf ban. According to the report by the BBC News (2004a) ‘The kidnappers originally said the men would be killed unless France repealed a law banning the wearing of Islamic headscarves in state schools’. However, it seems that this proposal backfired, as not only the non-Muslim French citizens, but also the French Muslim citizens were outraged by this idea, due mainly to the fact that France had made a public show of its opposition to the war in Iraq. According to Lichfield (2004b) ‘Far from inflaming the situation, the demands made by a radical Islamic group holding two French hostages in Iraq generated an impressive, nationwide solidarity and calm’ and the hostages were safely released without their demands being met.

The enforced removal of the hijab in schools began without much opposition in September 2004 and as they started the new school term some Muslim girls managed to get round the ban by using other ingenious methods of not showing their hair. One girl was reported by the BBC News (2004b) as ‘shaving her head’ to avoid the ban. According to Johnson (2004) two other girls chose to wear ‘… mid-length dyed chestnut-coloured wigs to get around the ban’ and ‘In many schools, pupils opted to wear bandanas and large head-bands, which are permitted’ instead of the scarf that they would usually wear to cover their hair.

1.7. The London Bombings 7th July 2005 (7/7)

On the 7th July 2005, four Muslim suicide bombers carried out attacks on the London underground and on a London bus. A year after 9/11, Blunkett (2002) had explained that ‘A real threat remains to this country. That is the stark truth’, but until 7/7, many
thought that it would never happen. However, this attack brought to the forefront the reality that suicide bombers and Islamic fundamentalists were living and working in Britain.

If attacks on Muslim women had been happening since 9/11, then these bombings in July gave some members of society even more reason to attack Muslims. Again Muslim women were targeted and one very influential leading Muslim scholar the late Dr Zaki Badawi was quoted in The Guardian by Dodd (2005) as saying: ‘In the present tense situation, with the rise of attacks on Muslims, we advise Muslim women who fear being attacked physically or verbally to remove their hijab so as not to be identified by those who are hostile to Muslims’. Not all Muslims accepted his advice and it sparked off debate amongst the women as to whether they should remove their headscarves or stand up to those who were attacking them. Many felt that they should not give in to those who persecuted them and that they should make a stand as Muslims to show that not all of them are terrorists and are proud to be Muslims. Amongst some however, there would have been relief that a recognised Muslim scholar had given permission for the headscarves to be removed.

1.8. The Jack Straw Controversy

On Thursday 5th October 2006, the MP for Blackburn, Labour Politician and Leader of the House of Commons Jack Straw, in his column in the Lancashire Telegraph expressed his concerns regarding the wearing of the niqab, worn by some Muslim women in Britain. Jack Straw was of the opinion that when the Muslim women came to talk to him in his surgery in Blackburn, he preferred to talk to them without the face veil. The following day The Guardian (2006a) reported the full text of Jack Straw’s column that began:

‘It’s really nice to meet you face-to-face, Mr Straw’, said this pleasant lady, in a broad Lancashire accent. She had come to my constituency advice bureau with a problem. I smiled back. ‘The chance would be a fine thing’, I thought to myself but did not say out loud. The lady was wearing the full veil. Her eyes were uncovered but the rest of her face was in cloth.

(The Guardian, 2006a)
These column inches caused an outcry and a series of debates began. Everyone seemed to be discussing the issue just as Jack Straw claimed had been his intention. He thought that the issue of the *niqab* had the potential to create problems in the future and felt that open discourse was needed. Bartlett (2006) reporting on this statement said that Jack Straw had given this issue a lot of thought and reported him as saying ‘My concerns could be misplaced. But I think there is an issue here’ and explained that since then Jack Straw always makes sure that he has a female member of staff present, and asks Muslim women to remove their face veils when they come to see him.

As soon as the comments had been made they became headline news not only in the *Lancashire Telegraph*, but also in the national newspapers. On 6th October 2006, *The Times* ran with the headline by Webster and Jenkins (2006) that read ‘Straw tells Muslims to lift their veils’ and also on 6th October 2006, *The Independent* included an article by Morris (2006) entitled ‘Straw: I feel uncomfortable with women wearing veils’. On Saturday 7th October 2006, *The Times* ran with two more articles entitled ‘I would prefer women not to wear the veil at all, says Straw’ (Browne, 2006) and ‘Islamic style is a blend of fashion and utility’ (Gledhill, 2006). However, this second article instead of just reporting on the comments made by Jack Straw, included an explanation of what types of dress Muslim women wear and why. According to Gledhill (2006) ‘Jack Straw’s reference was to the *niqab*, a head covering with a slit for the eyes, that is popular dress among strict Muslims in Britain’.

*The Guardian* (2006b) carried a related story entitled: ‘Jack Straw: Veiled issue’ and the same issue contained a second article by Taylor and Dodd (2006): ‘Take off the veil, says Straw – to immediate anger from Muslims: Cabinet minister opens debate with claim that veil is a symbol of separation’. This second article by Taylor and Dodd (2006) included comments that had been made previously on the issue of separation by MP Ruth Kelly who had ‘questioned whether multiculturalism was now encouraging segregation’ and MP John Reid who had ‘insisted Britain would not be bullied by Muslim fanatics, and he would not tolerate “no-go” neighbourhoods’.
On Sunday 8th October 2006 the Deputy Prime Minister of the time John Prescott, on the BBC News (2006a) joined the debate with his opposing opinion that ‘If a woman wants to wear a veil, why shouldn’t she? It’s her choice’ and elaborated that he would never ask for one to be removed. However, he did continue during the interview to say that he understood Jack Straw’s concerns regarding the issue of separateness.

On Tuesday 10th October 2006, the Prime Minister of the time Tony Blair decided that it was time for his views to be made known and The Muslim News (2006a) included his comments in an article entitled ‘Blair adds to row over Muslim veils’. Blair was reported as agreeing with Jack Straw and said that ‘…if we want to break down the barriers between people and between different cultures and religions, then it is important these issues are raised and discussed’. Included in the same article were reports of Islamophobic attacks, where Muslim women were now on the receiving end of hate mail and were living under the fear of physical attacks, which they perceived to have occurred as a direct result of Jack Straw’s comments. According to the Spokesman for the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF), Muhammad Abul Kalam, they were ‘…very much concerned that Jack Straw’s comments will be picked up by certain elements of the community who want to spread Islamophobia’.

The BBC News (2006b) ran with the Jack Straw story making it headline news. Alongside the inclusion of comments from members of Parliament as mentioned above, the BBC carried out their own surveys to see how members of the population were responding to the comments.

Safoora Nana, 19, Batley, Yorkshire. Ms Nana wears the niqab and has done so for two years. “It’s a requirement, an obligation for a woman to wear a niqab,” she said. She agreed there is a debate over whether a woman should cover her face or just her hair but she believes teachings from the Prophet Muhammad make it clear a woman should cover her face. (BBC News, 2006b)

Fatima Manji, 20, Peterborough. Ms Manji does not wear a niqab and welcomes debate from within the Muslim community on what is appropriate to wear – but does not believe it was Jack Straw’s place to comment on Muslim dress. (BBC News, 2006b)
However, the controversy caused by Jack Straw’s comments has not all been bad news for the Muslim community. A veil salesman in Blackburn, Mr Nadeem Siddiqui was reported by Suleaman (2006) as saying that the amount of veils he has sold has risen remarkably since Jack Straw spoke about the niqab. He explained that:

“I used to sell two or three a week but now I am selling five to six. They are mainly being bought by young, British-born Muslim women,” he said. “These women are experimenting with the wearing of the niqab. Their mothers often do not cover themselves but they seem to want to do it.” (Suleaman, 2006)

One such woman was Aishah Azmi who hit the headlines when she was suspended for refusing to remove her niqab at Headfield Church of England junior school in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire where she had been recently employed as a Teaching Assistant. Mrs Azmi had not worn her niqab during her interview at the school, but had started to wear it when she commenced her job in the September to the surprise of some of the male teaching staff. The government’s race minister, Phil Woolas, on the issue of Aishah Azmi was reported by The Muslim News (2006b) as saying:

She should be sacked. She has put herself in a position where she can’t do her job. She cannot teach a classroom of children wearing a veil. You cannot have a teacher who wears a veil simply because there are men in the room.  
(The Muslim News, 2006b)

Sometime after these comments were made, The Tory leader David Cameron decided that it was now his turn to comment on the number of politicians who were adding their voices to this debate, stating that too many were getting involved. He was then reported by the BBC News (2006c) as adding his opinion to the issue:

… he was concerned British Muslims were left feeling “slightly targeted”. But Mr Cameron said he sympathised with the school that suspended a teaching assistant who wore her veil in class. On Thursday, Aishah Azmi lost her religious discrimination and harassment claim but Kirklees Council was ordered to pay £1,100 for victimising her.  
(BBC News, 2006c)
1.9. Summary

Scholars have argued that the message of the *hijab*, believed to have been a revelation from Allah, was to protect women from the harassment that was happening in Arabia at that time. To distinguish the pious women from the non-pious, the women were given a strict dress code to enable the population to make the distinction.

The attacks of 9/11, the War on Terror, the Iraq War 2003 and the 7/7 bombings had an influence on the way that some members of society perceived Muslims. This time instead of protecting the women, many saw the *hijab*-wearing women as standing out as representatives of Islam, which potentially left them vulnerable to persecution. This social tension plays out with other social drives such as those who even before 9/11 thought that the *hijab* may have been a creation of its time and circumstance, having limited application within the modern world. The unease, discomfort and even fear that could be felt by some women when they were identified as Muslims in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, and in the subsequent re-evaluation of Muslims in society, has added a new dimension to the debate about the potential tension between the teachings of Islam and the wearing of the *hijab* in modern Britain. Is there now an argument that the *hijab* should be taken off to protect the individual from unwanted attention and potential danger from the wider non-Muslim elements of society?

Having set the context, the remainder of this thesis will examine how individuals have answered some of these questions regarding the wearing of the *hijab* to their own satisfaction, as well as exploring what other questions have arisen out of this debate and the effect they have had on the dress of women specifically. This research looks to see if these events have changed the way Muslim women perceive their place in society, and if there is a perception change, how far this has been replicated in changes in dress.
Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is an exploration of literature that has been written on the *hijab* including: the debate surrounding the instructions in the Qur’an and *Hadith*; restrictions on mixing with the opposite sex; the politics associated with the wearing of the *hijab* in various countries; feminist literature; dress and identity; veiling and fashion; and empirical research that has been carried out regarding the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain with some reference to other countries such as the U.S.A. and Canada.

Islamic dress is a topic that has interested many over the years. Since 9/11 many Muslim women have explored the idea of wearing the *hijab*. Although the use of the word *hijab* is widespread in the literature, other terms of reference such as headscarf and veil are also used interchangeably to describe the piece of cloth that is worn on the head of many Muslim women and girls.

Relevant information for different aspects of this thesis was researched in a variety of genres including: academic books and journals written by Muslims and non-Muslim authors; books and leaflets by non-academic Muslim authors; articles written by newspaper/magazine journalists; and programmes written by television journalists. These writings ranged from interpretations of the Qur’anic texts and instructions on what Muslim women should be wearing to feminists who believed that you did not have to cover to be a practising Muslim. An exploration of the history of the *hijab* and how it had been used in different countries to make a political statement, and fashion and identity were also identified as having relevance to the understanding of the *hijab*.

The literature obtained on the subject of rules and regulations governing Islamic dress, included various interpretations of the original Qur’anic text and the *Hadith*, the majority of these having been written by Muslims. The intention of these books and leaflets were to explain to Muslims, both men and women, why women should wear the *hijab* and help to translate the Qur’anic instructions to increase the understanding of what they should be wearing. Devotees of the religion, who wanted to put forth the Islamic ideals that should be followed by practising Muslims, wrote these books from a faith perspective.
Leaflets on the *hijab* written by Muslims were acquired from various sources, and appropriate websites were found, some of which were recommended by the interviewees. Western and Asian Magazines were also found that contained articles regarding the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain. These included: *AFM (The UK’s Premier Magazine for Asian Style and Fashion)*; and *Emel: The Muslim Lifestyle Magazine*.

Information was gathered from television programmes and documentaries examining some of the issues relating to: 9/11; Islam; being a British Muslim and the issues surrounding the wearing of the *hijab* today, both in Britain and in other countries.

Exhibitions focusing on Islam have become more popular too. Veil was an art exhibition that toured the country after the events of 9/11. According to the accompanying publication by Bailey and Tawadros (2003, p.18) it was started before the events of 9/11, as the concept of the veil already meant different things to different people. The Cartwright Hall Art Gallery also held an exhibition entitled: *It’s Still Hard Being British*. This was the start of a series of exhibitions that examined the idea of being British and Muslim.

The majority of the literature review spans from the late 1980s until 2012. Its aim is to set the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain into context and then examine key texts that have been written since this research began in 2001. Its focus is on the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain, but a brief history of the wider politicisation of the *hijab* is referred to.

### 2.2. Interpretation of Qur’anic instructions

The literature written by Muslims to encourage Muslim women to wear the *hijab* is an important place to start this review. Many of these authors translate the religious instructions from Arabic into other languages, including English, and are therefore accessible to non-Muslims who want to find out about the wearing of the *hijab* and where the original instructions can be found. Franks (1998, p.17), an ethnographer, found that much of the literature she discovered when carrying out her research with Christian and Muslim women was written from a religious point of view.
Two Muslim men who have written booklets for Muslims, and have included in them the dress obligations that they believe can be found by interpreting the original texts from the Qur’an, are Badawi (1994) and Doi (1995). Both authors based their booklets on surah (24:31). Badawi (1994) begins with the inclusion of the text in Arabic and then continues with an explanation of the text line by line, and although Doi (1995) follows the same format he begins his line-by-line explanation straight from the English translation. Badawi (1994, pp.5-9) uses his booklet to describe the extent, to which the woman should be covered, the looseness of the dress, the thickness, the overall appearance and any additional requirements relating to women’s dress. However, unlike Badawi (1994), Doi (1995, pp.11-16) only allocates a section of his commentary to dress and applies the modesty guidelines to both men and women. Doi (1995) also includes excerpts from the Sunnah of the Prophet, including discussions Muhammad had with other Muslims during his lifetime.

Another male Muslim author, Patel (1997, p.59) explains his view that the instructions pertaining to the dress of Muslim women come ‘straight from the Qur’an’. Like Badawi (1994) and Doi (1995), Patel (1997) also includes surah (24:31) in his text and a further discussion of the translation of these rules. These male Muslim authors who believe that the wearing of the hijab is essential and necessary, concur from the Qur’anic instructions, that Muslim women must cover their bodies except for their face and hands, although, none of these authors give any instructions relating to face covering. Patel (1997, p.59) re-iterates these instructions in his book, and goes a step further by starting to explain what the dress of the believer should look like.

A female Muslim author, Khattab (1996) gives a far more detailed account of the instructions to cover and clearly writes from a woman’s point of view. She does not include the authority from the Qur’an or Sunnah, but discusses what she believes are the two distinct meanings of hijab: the external hijab (1996, p.15) or what the woman should be wearing; and the internal hijab which Khattab (1996, p.18) describes as attitude and behaviour. Khattab (1996, p.15) begins by exploring the external hijab, with a list of conditions that should be adhered to.
Another female Muslim author, Nazlee (2001) agrees with these instructions to cover. Her book was a gift to me from one of the interviewees and is devoted entirely to the wearing of the *hijab*, exploring it from the time of the Prophet through to present day. She states that:

> Abu Dawood reported from Aishah that Asma, the daughter of Abu Bakr, came to see the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) wearing a thin dress. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) turned away and said to her, “*O Asma! When a woman reaches the age of puberty, she cannot reveal any part of her body, except this and this*” And he pointed to his face and hands.

(Nazlee, 2001, p.5)

To help Muslim women to fulfil their obligations, some of the authors break down these instructions into practical solutions for everyday wear. Badawi (1994, p.7), Doi (1996, p.14) and Nazlee (2001, p.35) explain that the cloth used for the outfit should be of a certain thickness so as not to be transparent. Doi (1996, p.14) explains further that this should be common sense to many Muslim women as the instruction was confirmed at the time of the Prophet ‘Hafsah, daughter of ‘Abdur-Rahman, once came before ‘A’isha wearing a thin shawl over her head and shoulders. ‘A’isha tore it up and put a thick shawl over her’.

Khattab (1996, p.15) begins with the point of view that Western clothing or any clothing could be worn as long as it complied with the instructions in the Qur’an. However, she then explains exactly what women should wear and what it should look like and although she advises women to wear what appear to be modifications of Western dress Khattab (1996, p.16) states that Muslim women are not encouraged to wear the clothes that look like those of non-Muslims. These women should be easily identified as Muslim, so if wearing Western clothes they should always wear a head covering to ensure that they can be distinguished from any other religion or Western women. Khattab (1996, p.16) explains that: ‘One of the functions of Hijab is to identify the wearer as a Muslim who is proud (in the best sense) of her Islam. In particular, we should avoid wearing clothes which imitate the religious dress of others’.
According to Khattab (1996, p.16) women are not encouraged to wear the clothing that looks like men's either. If a woman wishes to wear trousers they should be of a design especially made for women. Khattab (1996, p.17) explains the garments should not have gems attached to them or be woven with valuable threads such as gold and silver. This would attract attention to the wearer and is a show of wealth.

The wearing of the *jilbab* is approved of by Nazlee (2001, p.33) and Khattab (1996, p.17). Although according to Nazlee (2001 p.33) she is witnessing women wearing the *hijab*, but their other outer garments were not being worn correctly. In many cases women were not putting on their *jilbabs* or their clothes did not fulfil the Qur’anic instructions.

Therefore, it is the view of these authors that the Qur’an instructs the women to cover their bodies, just leaving their face and hands uncovered. For this purpose many women today, have adopted the wearing of a *jilbab* and together with the head covering, they believe that this satisfies the rules that were laid down for them.

Nazlee (2001, p.29) and Khattab (1996, p.22) mention the internal *hijab*, meaning the way to ‘behave in an Islamic manner’ and relate this to the wearing of the external *hijab*. To both of these authors the way a Muslim woman acts is just as important as the way that she dresses. Khattab (1996, p.22) believes that if a woman achieves success in her internal *hijab*, then as a side effect the external *hijab* will be put on as an outward show of her Muslim identity.

Therefore, it can be seen that there is a variety of literature interpreting the Qur’anic instructions, which clearly explain to Muslims what should be worn as a practising member of the religion. The small selection examined here all endorse the wearing of the *hijab* and make it quite clear that it is a religious obligation that should be worn by all Muslim women. However, this does not provide the answer as to how Muslims who do not wear the *hijab* justify their choices.
2.3. Feminist arguments/interpretations against veiling

In opposition to these authors who support the wearing of the *hijab* and their interpretations of the instructions in the Qur’an, some Muslim and non-Muslim authors have gone as far as to say that it is not necessary to wear the *hijab* and *jilbab* in the West today. The instructions given depend greatly on the interpretation of the religious texts.

One author who breaks the pattern of endorsing the wearing of *hijab* by looking at it from a very different feminist angle is Mernissi (1991). Mernissi (1991, p.85) discusses the history of the word *hijab* and its original meanings at the time of Muhammad, concluding that it was not meant to mean a head covering for women, but was a separation between the private and public spaces used by the Prophet Muhammad. Mernissi (1991, p.93) explores the Qur’anic instructions and believes that the *hijab* or veil incorporated a variety of meanings relevant to the time of the revelation and was therefore never meant to apply to Muslim women.

By exploring the different uses of the term *hijab*, Mernissi (1991) exposes the ways that it has been used by different sections of Islam. She acknowledges that it has now become an important aspect of Islam, but does not believe that the term used in the Qur’an and subsequently interpreted by Muslim scholars relates to women wearing the *hijab* as it is worn today. Mernissi (1991, p.95) states that ‘Reducing or assimilating this concept to a scrap of cloth that men have imposed on women to veil them when they go into the street is truly to impoverish this term, …’.

Therefore, according to Mernissi, Muslim women are not obliged to wear the *hijab*, as the words in the Qur’an were not intended as an instruction to cover their heads. She would disagree with the manuals interpreting the instructions in the Qur’an with regards to dress and those who would try to enforce the wearing of the *hijab* on Muslim women.
The work of Mernissi is documented by McGinty (2006, p.112), an ethnographer, who explains how Mernissi ‘analyzed [sic] Islamic patriarchal ideas’ regarding the separation of men and women. McGinty (2006, p.112) takes the reader through the different meanings of the *hijab* as expressed by Mernissi and includes in this description Mernissi’s belief that the *hijab* was referring to a curtain separating the Prophet from a male visitor.

The sections of the Qur’an that mention modesty and the writings of Mernissi are also referred to by Franks (2001, p.128) who writes that, ‘according to Fatima Mernissi (1994), there are two ways in which separation through veiling takes place in Islam’. The first being the ‘architectural division’ or the separation between the Prophet and his companions; and the second that relates to ‘dress and decorum’. According to Franks (2001, p.129) this gives Muslim women the opportunity to ‘… move between traditionally female and male spheres’ and includes an explanation from Mernissi as to how Muslim women at the time of the Prophet used the veil to show that they were neither prostitutes nor slaves. Franks (2001, p.129) also makes reference to Wadud-Muhsin (1992) who believes that the justification for veiling cannot be found in the Qur’an and that it was common for the women of the wealthy tribes to be covered at the time of the Prophet. According to Franks (2001 p.130) Mernissi and Wadud-Muhsin see the wearing of the veil as based on ‘cultural practices’ unconnected to Islam or relating to the Prophet’s wives.

The Qur’anic instructions on the wearing of the *hijab* is explored by Ahmed (1992, p.55), a Muslim writer on Islamic feminism who, like Mernissi and Wadud-Muhsin, comes to the conclusion that the revelations regarding the *hijab* were not meant to be interpreted as they are today, but believes that the wearing of the veil only applied to the wives of the Prophet. Thus, according to some authors, the strict wearing of the *hijab* that is worn by many Muslim women in Britain and around the world is not part of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and Ahmed (1992, p.56) is not sure when this practice became popular amongst the Muslim population.
According to Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.395) whereas Muslim elites often favour the wearing of the veil, many Islamic feminists believe that the veil should not be worn. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.400) highlight the work of Muslim feminists and in particular Mernissi who they describe as ‘arguably the most prominent Muslim feminist’. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.401) explain how these feminists link the wearing of the veil to what they see as the male hierarchy, explain how the wearing of the veil is not a Muslim invention, and document Mernissi’s (1991) viewpoints and her interpretation of the Qur’anic texts.

Opposed to this viewpoint is Bullock (2003), a Muslim author who converted to Islam and writes to advocate the wearing of the hijab. Bullock (2003, p.141) analyses and discusses the writings of Mernissi (1987, 1991). As a recent convert to the religion and an enthusiastic wearer of the hijab, Bullock (2003, p.153) believes that although Mernissi (1987) is seen as an authority on the wearing of the hijab, much of her work is autobiographical and relates to the time when she was growing up in Morocco. The fact that the hijab is oppressive is disputed by Bullock (2003) who refutes much of what has been written by Mernissi (1987, 1991) on this topic. In her critique of Mernissi’s (1987, 1991) books, Bullock (2003, p.180) believes that Mernissi (1987, 1991) ignores the voices of those women who choose to wear the hijab in order to put her own point of view forward and that by doing this ‘Mernissi (1987, 1991) is only reinscribing the colonial and Orientalist view of the ‘veiled woman’’. According to Bullock (2003, p.180) Mernissi’s (1987, 1991) ‘vision is reductive, ignoring the sociological complexity of covering’.

A Swedish Muslim convert Roald (2001) examines the Qur’anic instructions and their interpretations, and then explores some of the feminist discourse regarding the wearing of the hijab in the West today. In particular Roald (2001, p.256) looks at the views of Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed (1992), and like Bullock (2003) argues how she thinks the interpretations and the views expressed by Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed (1992) are incorrect. According to Roald (2001, p.259) some ‘Muslim feminists’ dismiss the idea that the ‘veil is Islamic’ and believe that it is ‘an ancient tradition’ that has become part of modern Islam. Roald (2001) is particularly concerned with the way that Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed (1992) interpret the Qur’anic instructions, and Roald (2001, p.260) explains how Mernissi (1987) has misinterpreted the
scriptures, either intentionally or unintentionally, and has omitted to talk about the term *khimar*. Roald (2001, p.260) shows how Mernissi (1987) and Ahmed (1992) use these interpretations to explain that the wearing of the *hijab* is not a religious obligation and show that only the wives of the Prophet were meant to cover. Roald (2001, p.262) expands to explain that in Ahmed’s (1992) opinion the covering with the *hijab* does not mean women living in Britain today, but is ‘context-related’ and only applies to women in Medina at the time of the Prophet.

Sechzer (2004, p.268) predominantly discusses the status of women in Islam from the time of Muhammad until the present day and makes reference to the Qur’anic texts, explaining that the rules regarding dress are interpretations taken from the verses of the Qur’an and the requirement for a head covering comes ‘from interpretation of the word “khimar”’. However, at the time of Muhammad this was a ‘loose scarf’ not a fixed *hijab*. Sechzer (2004, p.269) like Mernissi (1991) and Ahmed (1992), explains that it was only the Prophet’s wives who would cover their heads and that the instructions detailing this are included in the Qur’an. Ordinary women were not expected to cover their heads and this covering has only been adopted since the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Sechzer (2004, p.269) continues to argue that the use of this veiling by ordinary Muslims after the death of Muhammad, has affected the status of Muslim women and their role within Islam.

Discussing in depth the words used for covering, El Guindi (2000, p.157) brings to the attention of the reader how the word *hijab* can convey the notions of separation and seclusion and like Sechzer (2004) believes that this does not mean that all Muslim women should cover. Like Roald (2001), El Guindi (2000, p.157) explores the fact that the word *hijab* is not used in the Qur’anic texts that refer to dress. When the term *hijab* is used in other verses in the Qur’an it is used to convey the idea of separation and not seclusion and therefore in her view the texts do not mean that women should be secluded. El Guindi (2000, p.157) explains that the word *hijab* was attributed to the head covering of a Muslim at a much later date in history and was not used at the time of the revelations. The idea of the *hijab* was present, but not the in the same way that the name is used in the West today.
Rather than focus on the *hijab*, Moghissi (1999) explores Islamic feminism and talks of the position that women hold within Islam in the Middle East and how Muslim women through the ages have fought for their rights. However, on the interpretation of the Qur’an she explains how ‘secularists’ and ‘modernists’ have blamed the ill-treatment of women on a misinterpretation of the texts, and, that ‘Muslim reformers claimed that Islamic rules were male-biased, and a culturally distorted interpretation of the Qur’an’ (Moghissi 1999, p.130).

According to Hannan (2011, p.81), a specialist on gender issues, there is a possibility that the idea of the head covering for Muslim women has been misunderstood and as such her research with British Scholars of Islam and Muslim women from Leicester explores the different interpretations of ‘female dress in Islam’. Hannan (2011, p.82) begins by ‘exploring the discourse on the head cover and face veil’. Her interviewees were asked where the instructions with regard to dress comes from and came to the conclusion that although some of the women could state the chapter and verses from the Qur’an, the women believed that they did not need to be ‘aware of specific references themselves’ as the interpretations had already been carried out by scholars. These interpretations ‘based upon early historical interpretations’, according to Hannan (2011, p.82), ‘would have been influenced by their social context, the cultural and political scene at the time’.

Like Mernissi (1991), Roald (2001), and El Guindi (2000), Hannan (2011, p.82) explores the ‘terminology’ used in relation to female covering. Hannan (2011, p.83) believes the interpretations of the words in the Qur’an can ‘vary quite significantly’ and the interpretations can depend on ‘how the author/commentator of the *tafsir* (exegesis) regards the subject matter’. Hannan begins her exploration of the terms, with the word *hijab*, which is used to describe Muslim female dress. According to Hannan (2011, p.83) the word does not mean the covering of the body and head covering of Muslim women, but literally translated means ‘any partition which is used to separate two things’. Hannan (2011, p.83) notes that although the word *hijab* is used in ‘modern terminology with respect to Muslim female dress code, it is not mentioned in this context in the Qur’an’.
Reference is made to Mernissi (1991), and according to Hannan (2011, p.84), Mernissi (1991) believes that the term *hijab* is used to mean ‘the separation of the woman from wider society’. However, when the verse is looked at more closely and in context with the *Hadith* it means the separation ‘between a man in the public sphere and a man in his more intimate and private sphere’. Hannan (2011 p.84), goes on to show how Mernissi (1991) sees the instructions in the Qur’an as relating to the ‘Prophet and his family’ and that Mernissi (1991) is adding ‘another dimension to the debate’ as she exposes the revelation as telling the men at that time that they should ‘assess and control their behaviour’ and in particular they should respect the privacy of ‘the Prophet and his wives’. Hannan (2011, p.85) continues to explain that ‘the wives of the Prophets are role models’ for Muslim women today, and this is why they cover just as the Prophet’s wives covered. However, Hannan (2011, p.85) states that it was the Prophet himself that was to be ‘the example for all of mankind (male and female)’ and the rules given were for the wives of the Prophet alone and not for ordinary women.

Other Arabic words are also looked at in detail by Hannan (2001, pp.85-90) who shows that none of the terms used in the Qur’an specifically talk of the fixed head covering that Muslim women wear today. However, these words do tell us something about the dress and covering of the women when put into context. Hannan (2011, p.85) explains that the *jilbab* is not ‘a specific type of clothing’ so could mean ‘a blouse/shirt and trousers in the UK’ and when discussing this with an Islamic scholar shows that it is the area of the body that is to be covered that is important rather than the specific form of covering itself. Hannan (2011, p.87) shows how women at the time of the Prophet were already covering their head with a *khimar* and this is why the revelation tells them to use it to cover those parts that should not be seen. Hannan (2011, p.99) concludes that the ‘primary Islamic texts (the Qur’an and the *ahadith*)’ contain only a small amount of information about ‘the specifics of female dress’. Hannan (2011, p.100) suggests that as society changes ‘re-assessment of such interpretations’ should be carried out and ‘that a renewed process of *ijtihad* (interpretation, reasoning) is required in this area’ (Hannan 2011, p.101).
Thus there are a variety of books interpreting the Qur’anic instructions and those who do not wear the *hijab* interpret these in a very different way to those who believe that the *hijab* should be worn as a practising member of the religion. The literature examined here debates the use of the terms used in the Qur’an, and the arguments by authors such as Mernissi (1991) and Ahmed (1992) make it quite clear that to some authors it is not a religious obligation, and that the *hijab* should not be worn by all Muslim women.

### 2.4. Restrictions on mixing with the opposite sex

Many of those women who wear the *hijab* believe that they are told quite clearly in the Qur’an, *surah* (24:31) the circumstances in which they are allowed to take off their *hijab* and to whom they can reveal some parts of their body. Anyone who fits into the category listed is considered to be *mahrem*. Muslim women are told that when they are with these people they can comfortably remove their *hijab*, however, with all other members of society they must be covered with their *hijab* and *jilbab*.

Discussing the dress of women in great detail and those people that women can show themselves to is Al-Qaradawi (2003, p.142) who lists ‘twelve categories of persons’ in front of whom Muslim women can remove their *hijab*. He expands the information to give the reader a clearer understanding of why these instructions were revealed at the time of the Prophet. Non-Muslim women are one of those categories and Al-Qaradawi (2003) explains the Islamic ruling that non-Muslim women should not see Muslim women without their *hijab*.

Although, there is much written in Islam about what women are not allowed to do and who not to show themselves to, El Guindi (2000, p.60) explains that these rules do not apply in the home or with only family members present. Often the images seen in the media show women covered from head to toe with *hijab* and *jilbab* and many non-Muslims believe that the Muslim women are forced to wear this all of the time. Both Wadud (2002) a scholar of Islam, and Al-Qaradawi (2003, p.151) mention the fact that at the onset of Islam, women during this time were involved in battles, especially A’ishah who is famously remembered for being in the army at the Battle of the Camel. Obviously women at this time were not confined to the house and played an
active part in the promotion and spread of early Islam. Agreeing with Wadud (2002) and Al-Qaradawi (2003), Mernissi (1991, p.188) also believes that before the revelations that relate to dress, Muslim women had much more freedom to come and go as they pleased. She also uses the example of women taking part in the battles to show how women were treated as equals. However, she then goes on to show that over the years the *hijab* has come to mean a separation of men and women, forcing women into the home and away from society and public life. According to Mernissi (1991, p.188) ‘All debates on democracy get tied up in the woman question and that piece of cloth that opponents of human rights today claim to be the very essence of Muslim identity’.

Stating without a doubt that women should not be allowed to go out to work, or mix with the opposite sex, but should stay at home and carry out their duties there is His Eminence, Shaykh Abdul Azeez bin Abdullah bin Baaz (1997, p.3), a Saudi Arabian Islamic scholar, who explains that Islamic law stipulates that a Muslim woman should stay at home. Azeez bin Abdullah bin Baaz (1997, p.13) plays down the fact that some Muslim women were in the army during the famous battles and discounts the actions of these women as a justification for going out to work.

Disputing this fact that women should stay at home is Al-Qaradawi (2003, p.151) who is quite clear that as long as Muslim women stick to the precise dress code, there is no reason why they should not go out of the house. He gives a list of reasons why a woman may need to leave the house and relates this back to the time of the Prophet when women would leave the house and mix in society.

Writing from a non-Muslim female point of view on Islam and human rights is Mayer (1999), an associate professor of legal studies. She explores the position that although women were given rights, it is the same rights that can cause oppression. One example Mayer (1999, p.60) gives is the fact that women have the right not to be surprised by male guests in their own home, which in turn can become restrictive for the women. The protection of women in this case can sometimes lead to a complete loss of freedom, which is often seen as the case with veiling and the *hijab*. Mayer (1999, p.61) explores the idea of seclusion and veiling even in the home, and after looking at the way Muslim women were treated around the world, especially in
Muslim countries, comes to the conclusion that the women were not treated as fully equal human beings. Mayer (1999, p.98) explains that she can understand how Muslim women are ‘very skeptical [sic] when assured that Islam, which initially aimed to remove the disabilities women had suffered in pre-Islamic Arabia, provides the rationale for keeping women in a subjugated, inferior status’ and blames this status on the interpretations made originally by male jurists.

Therefore, it can be seen from the literature written about Muslim women, that the dress code was originally there to protect them. Although some women may feel that they have been pushed into the background over the centuries, the *hijab* has given many women the freedom to leave the house and live their lives among men and non-Muslims.

**2.5. Politics of the veil**

Many Muslim female authors have written about the history of the wearing of the *hijab* and the politics that have often been associated with the choices to wear it or not to wear it. As already mentioned El Guindi (2000, pp.169-176) explores not only the language associated with the wearing of the headscarf, but also plots the history of the veil and the reasons why some women have chosen to wear it, sometimes as a form of rebellion and under difficult circumstances. A variety of Muslim writings are included by Moghadam (1994), a feminist scholar and sociologist who examines the wearing of the *hijab* and the different meanings that it has held for different generations of women living in differing parts of the world. Moghadam (1994, p.14) describes how the wearing of the *hijab* is a ‘distinguishing mark’ that identifies which women are Muslims and that ‘it is a shield against the slings and arrows of imperialists’.

Exploring the wearing of the *hijab* in Iran, Algeria, Sudan, West Bank and Egypt, is sociologist Moghissi (1999, pp.43-44) who explains that in each country the *hijab* is worn for different reasons, not necessarily linked to freedom of choice or the teachings in the Qur’an. El Guindi (2000, p.172) examines how the *hijab* has been a significant factor in countries around the world, she begins with Algeria and traces how the use of the *hijab* was a key factor in opposing the French colonialists. In her opinion, the more the French opposed the wearing of the veil, the harder the Algerian
women fought to wear it. Also discussing the wearing of the *hijab* in Algeria are Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine (1994, p.183). They begin by looking at the impact of the ‘Islamist’ movement in Algeria, explaining that an example of ‘new clothing’ for Algerian women is the wearing of the *hijab*. El Guindi (2000, p.174) then moves to Palestine and again talks of how Muslim women irrespective of class or social status were moved to put on the *hijab*, which became a ‘symbol of resistance’.

Finishing with an exploration of the revolution in Iran, El Guindi (2000, pp.174-175) explains how the *hijab* was banned in 1936, a move that she states was welcomed by those who wanted to be seen as Westernised, but how this also caused outrage to those who did not wish to remove it. She briefly explores the wearing of the *hijab* from this time until 1979 and shows how the *hijab* often prevented women from accessing all areas of society, although in the 1970s there were women choosing to wear the *hijab*. Then with the new regime in 1979 and the enforcement of the wearing of the *hijab*, other women were protesting against the wearing of it. Also examining the history of the wearing of the *hijab* in Iran is Tavakoli-Targhi (1994, p.115) who concludes with how during the revolution the wearing of the *hijab* was implemented by the authorities to cleanse Iran of the Shah and any ‘Western influence’. In addition Gerami (1994 p.333), a social scientist, who along with the other authors who have written on Iran, makes the distinction between the wearing of the *hijab* during the time of the Shah in the early 1970s and the wearing of the *hijab* in Iran since the Islamic revolution of March 1979. Whereas the *hijab* was worn as a symbol of resistance in the 1970s, the enforced wearing of it in 1979 also ‘created a strong resistance’ to the wearing of it.

Charting her life as a child growing up in Iran, during and after the revolution in 1979, and the changes that took place is Satrapi (2008). Satrapi (2008, p.3) begins with a commentary on the start of the ‘Islamic revolution’ and the enforced wearing of the veil, and explains that ‘We didn’t really like to wear the veil, especially since we didn’t understand why we had to’.
After a time spent in Europe, and upon her return to Iran, Satrapi (2008) noticed the difference that the wearing of the *hijab* made to her life, and how due to the pressures placed on men and women by the state, their public life was a complete contrast to the way that some lived behind closed doors. Satrapi (2008, p.296) also comments on the way that a *hijab* was worn, and how it could tell you a great deal about the person underneath.

A female Muslim Iranian national Shirazi (2003, p.10) explores how the *hijab* has been used in various mediums and predominantly explores its use in advertising. Shirazi (2003, p.108) explains how Iranian woman were made to take off their veils during the rule of the Shah, but were then made to put them back on again under the rule of the Ayatollah. She concludes by saying that for many women the veil ‘is just another article of clothing’ whereas for other women ‘the veil is an enormously important symbol, as it carries thousands of years of religious, sexual, social, and political significance within its folds’ (Shirazi 2003, p.180).

In her discourse on the wearing of the *hijab*, El Guindi (2000, p.179) comments on how the debate had already started in Egypt as early as the 1870s and 1880s. Then when Huda Sha’rawi took off her face-veil in 1923, she was reflecting a ‘change already taking place’. According to El Guindi, as early as 1923, women were establishing themselves as thinking individuals who were choosing for themselves whether to wear the *hijab* or not. These women were making the decisions for themselves and were not being forced into it by the men. Looking at the wearing of the *hijab* in Egypt, Badran (1994, p.209), an historian, explores the wearing of the veil there. She explains how it is the educated women who have been putting on the veil, and that the women have been involved in discussions relating to this topic, whereas traditionally it was just the men. Mernissi (1996, p.102) briefly mentions the movement in Egypt and refers to the work by Badran stating that ‘Many Western feminists were surprised by Margot Badran’s biography of the Egyptian feminist, Huda Sha’arawi (1879-1924), for they had been convinced that Muslim women were no more than obsequious followers in the struggle for women’s rights’. 
Moghissi (1999, p.44) also refers to the revival of the *hijab* in Egypt and believes that it is linked to ‘the failure of over a century of capitalist modernization to secure palpable improvements in women’s lives or change cultural and religious patriarchal values and practices’.

From this selection of authors who have written in great depth regarding the wearing of the *hijab* in different countries it can be seen that there are a variety of viewpoints expressed as to the reasons why the *hijab* is worn or not worn. It can be seen from those writing about the wearing of the *hijab* in political situations around the world, that the *hijab* has been used by Muslims to mean different things to different generations. It is believed in some cases that Muslim men have instigated much of this desire for women to wear the *hijab*, and Muslim women have reacted to these issues in different ways.

### 2.6. Empirical research on the *hijab* in the West prior to 9/11

Articles and chapters about Islam and Muslim women in Britain have been divided into those that were written before 9/11, and those that were written after the event. Those chosen include a variety of issues that range from articles that compare veiling to anorexia, and to those that talk about Muslim women in medieval literature. In these writings some research on Muslim women in Britain prior to 9/11 could be found, but these tended to focus on the problems with wearing the *hijab* and the discrimination these women have faced.

Carrying out research with thirty Muslim women in Birmingham, the majority of who wore the *hijab*, were Anwar and Shah (2000, p.214). They began by interviewing ‘friends or colleagues’ using semi-structured and group interviews and offered anonymity to the women. Group interviews encouraged the women to discuss their similar experiences within the group environment, and enabled multiple women to be spoken to in a shorter time period. Anwar and Shah (2000, p.224) found that some of the women felt that they were treated as though stupid when wearing the veil, and their study showed that if there was perceived discrimination then 90% of it was to do with the wearing of the *hijab*. The women interviewed by Anwar and Shah (2000, p.225) explained that they were perceived to be uneducated and were often asked if
they spoke English when they went out to mix with the non-Muslim British society. Those who lived and worked in Muslim communities found that they did not experience any discrimination. However, some of the women felt that they were treated this way because they stood out as being different, rather than the fact that they were Muslims. According to Anwar and Shah (2000, p.225) ‘Because the discrimination is not directed toward Islam (hijab, etc.), it is difficult to tell whether they object to their ethnicity or faith’.

In addition to discrimination faced by the women in Birmingham, Anwar and Shah (2000, p.228) uncovered problems that hijab wearing pupils had experienced at school. One of the women gave an example of discrimination that occurred ‘when her father insisted on her wearing’ the hijab for school and believed that the abuse she received could be directly attributed to the wearing of the hijab. This seemed to be the general consensus, and the women were much happier when they left school and found that they had no problems when attending University as a Muslim woman. They even explained to Anwar and Shah (2000, p.229) that the University of Birmingham had a permanent prayer room. Finally, Anwar and Shah (2000, p.230) cite an example of a school in Luton where ‘two girls were placed in isolation for refusing to remove their hijabs’ with the school claiming that the hijab could not be worn for ‘safety reasons’.

Also highlighting the issue of wearing the hijab in schools is Sarwar (1994, p.17) who believes that the wearing of the hijab in schools should not be a problem and he suggests that it could be worn in the same colour as the rest of the school uniform. He focuses on the fact that some girls have been sent home for wearing it and ‘banned from following the requirements of their faith’. What these authors could not predict in 1994 or 2000 is that by 2004 this debate had moved on from the issue of hijab in Luton schools to a debate over the wearing of the jilbab.

This research prior to 9/11 shows that Muslim women are facing discrimination and abuse when they wear the hijab in the West and Franks (2000) agrees with these findings. Her research was carried out with white Muslims who have adopted the hijab and her writings show that these white women living in Britain are facing the same racial abuse as Asian or Middle Eastern women. Franks (2000, p.922) reports
that according to one of her respondents: ‘some members of the white community hurl racial abuse’ while the ‘many Muslims, more influenced by their cultures than faith find it hard to comprehend an “English Muslim”’. Although some of the women who wear the *hijab* in the West are facing problems and discrimination regardless of race or ethnicity, her research and findings conclude that the women she interviewed were choosing to wear their *hijab* and are not being forced into it, as the stereotypes would suggest.

As well as exploring the wearing of the *hijab*, Bullock (2003, p.40) includes the results of the interviews that she carried out with sixteen Muslim women in Toronto, Canada. She comments on the experiences of the women living in the West, and the approach to Islam that the media held pre 9/11. Although this book was published post 9/11, her interviews for her research were carried out pre 9/11. Bullock originally set out to interview twenty-one women, although the quantity of data gathered meant that she stopped when she reached sixteen. She explains that the qualitative interviews were carried out either on the University campus or in women’s homes. The answers were taped and the anonymity of the interviewees preserved by giving them pseudonyms. The interviewees represented women who wore the *hijab* and those who did not and she clarified that she already knew many of the interviewees, as they attended groups that she already belonged to. Through interviewing the women Bullock (2003 p.84) concludes that the women who wear the *hijab* face discrimination in Toronto and that the public see Islam as ‘promoting violence’. However, the women she interviewed expressed the view that ‘…hijab symbolized not oppression or terrorism, but “purity,” “modesty,” a “woman’s Islamic identity,” and “obedience, or submission to God and a testament that you’re Muslim’ (Bullock 2003, p.84). As a *hijab*-wearing Muslim, Bullock believes that for any discussion regarding the wearing of the *hijab* to take place, those who do and those who do not wear it have to take into consideration each other’s viewpoints.
The interview techniques and the questions asked by Bullock (2003) were a useful comparison to this research that was carried out with Muslim women in Britain. Although some of the questions she asked were similar, the fact that her research was carried out in Canada meant that it showed the experiences of the women living there, and they would not necessarily be the same as the experiences of the women living in Britain.

Poole (2000, p.162) who lectures in media studies, shows the increasing number of times that Islam is mentioned in the British press and certain events have brought Islam to the forefront of people’s minds. Poole (2000, p.158) believes that Muslims are stereotyped in the media and all are described as one large group with the same characteristics. In relation to women in Islam she explains that they are often portrayed as backward and oppressed with few human rights.

However, not all of the research showed negative experiences faced by the women and in fact Anwar and Shah (2000) witnessed a renewed interest in the wearing of the hijab in the women who they spoke to. Some of the women in Birmingham were choosing to put on the hijab for themselves and were not asking their husbands for their opinions or approval first. Anwar and Shah (2000, p.226) explain how some of the women decided to wear the hijab once they were married and how it gave them a ‘feeling of contentment and liberation’. Anwar and Shah (2000, p.218) noticed that particularly the older generation who were more settled and less conscious of their looks or fashion were putting on the hijab as a religious statement and found that this behaviour ‘gave them more freedom’ to go out into public places. In her later writings Al-Khattab (1998, p.74) talks about the renewed interest that is occurring amongst Muslim women and states that “Local” forms of hijab are beginning to emerge among Muslims in the West, just as regional styles have evolved throughout the Muslim world’. Acknowledging what he calls this ‘New Veiling Phenomenon’ Nasser (1999, p.407) believes that this new interest in the wearing of the veil is more than an ‘Islamic revival’ or a ‘re-activation of tradition’ and therefore, requires a ‘deeper analysis’.
Anwar and Shah (2000, p.218) also found from their research that although some of the women that they had spoken to had had negative experiences of being a Muslim woman in Britain, others had had very positive experiences and enjoyed choosing to wear it rather than it being forced upon them. Agreeing with this view Khattab (1996, p.18) explains that people in the West are getting used to seeing Muslim women in their hijab, especially compared to how Muslim women were viewed in the 1980s.

As part of their research Read and Bartkowski (2000) examined what veiling meant to different groups of Muslims. In particular they looked at opposing groups of Muslim women living in the U.S.A. to build on the studies carried out in the Middle East. By interviewing women in the U.S.A. and analysing what was said, they came to conclusions regarding the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab by Muslim women. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.397) found that there was ‘ideological divergence, as well as unanticipated points of congruence, between these veiled and unveiled Muslim women concerning this controversial cultural practice’. The women interviewed also talked of difficulties they faced when choosing to veil. Some problems were associated with living in non-Muslim countries whereas in contrast other problems were connected to the views of family members. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.406) discovered one woman in particular who was facing criticism from a family member when she wore the veil, but in turn faced disapproval from Muslim friends when she took it off.

Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.410) show how those who do not veil do not like to criticise those Muslim women who do. Some believe that it is men that are responsible for requiring the women to veil in the first place, so the women cannot be blamed for wearing it, whereas others can see how some women living in the U.S.A. want to hold on to their culture. It was also found that although the women did not wear the veil now, they had worn it at some time in the past and therefore, had empathy with the women.
Without knowing what was to occur in the U.S.A. in September 2001, these authors have already shown through their research and subsequent writings that Islam and the wearing of the *hijab* was already starting to increase in the West at the end of the 1990s.

### 2.7. Impact of 9/11

Post 9/11 the *hijab* was to play an even more important part in the discourse about Islam. This research with British Muslims is important as it tells the stories of what it was like for Muslim women living in Britain with regards to the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* post 9/11, and any effects that this may have had on the dress of the women.

As soon as the attacks on The World Trade Centre happened in the U.S.A., the number of articles written about Islam increased significantly. Newspapers and magazines were examining the problems of living in the West for Muslims. Modernity was discussed and the issue of Islamophobia was referred to more frequently. Many of these articles referred to the wearing of *hijab*, most of which were written by members of the Muslim community, including articles in magazines such as *Q News* and first-hand accounts submitted to *The Muslim News*. The broadsheets in Britain also began to report on specific stories concerning the *hijab*.

Although *The Muslim News* has always reported on Islamophobia when it has occurred in the community, post 9/11 these articles became more frequent as many of these Islamophobic attacks were now physical and verbal attacks aimed at Muslim women wearing the *hijab*. The first incident to be reported post 9/11 was in May 2002 in Issue 157 with an article entitled *Islamophobic attack on Muslim woman*. According to Khalil (2002) a Muslim woman was followed by two men, who verbally abused her, removed her *hijab* and then ‘proceeded to cut it up with a small knife’, which was very clearly a symbolic attack on the veil itself.
Things seemed to be quiet for a while, but then with the onset of the Iraq War in April 2003, the front page of Issue 168 was dedicated to an article by Versi (2003). The article reported on incidents that had occurred in different parts of the country to differing groups of Muslims, including a *hijab*-wearing woman who was spat at. These articles add to the research carried out for this thesis, but whereas the paper has asked for information on the negative incidents that have happened to people since the War, the nature of this research will hopefully show a more balanced side to life as a Muslim in Britain.

In addition to reporting on attacks on *hijab* wearing women, *The Muslim News* has documented other issues regarding the *hijab* including the issue of wearing it in schools. As stated in the section pre 9/11, the debate has moved on from the issue of wearing the *hijab* in schools to the subject of the wearing of a *jilbab*. Versi (2001) tells the story of a pupil at a school in Manchester who was expelled because she refused to wear the proper school uniform. Although the pupils at her school were predominantly Muslim, this particular pupil had decided that the uniform did not fulfil her religious obligations. Another case regarding the wearing of a *jilbab* in schools was reported by Buaras (2004) who explains how a Luton pupil by the name of Shahida Begum had refused to go to school unless she was allowed to wear her *jilbab*. Other mainstream newspapers ran with this story, as did the national news channels. One such newspaper that had the articles online was *The Times*. It followed the story from when it first broke in May 2004 until it went to the Royal Court of Justice in March 2005. According to Johnston (2005) ‘A Muslim schoolgirl today won her legal battle to wear traditional “head-to-toe” dress in the classroom, in a case that will force multi-faith schools to make their uniform rules comply with human rights laws’.

Another issue that came to light in *The Muslim News* was the banning of the *hijab* in French schools. Although the newspaper had been reporting on attacks on women wearing *hijab*, Chapman (2004) condemned the French proposals and included comments from MCB Secretary-General, Iqbal Sacraine, stating how women had positive experiences of wearing the *hijab* in Britain.
Not only did the *hijab* ban in France make the front page, but on subsequent pages the official view of *The Muslim News* was stated, followed by a letter from a woman who wore the *hijab* in Birmingham and another report by Hiridjee (2004) on demonstrations that had taken place in Paris the month before.

While *The Muslim News* was gathering information on the negative aspects of wearing the *hijab* in Britain post-9/11, non-Muslim newspapers, in particular *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent* were giving column inches to the wearing of Islamic dress in Britain.

Alibhai-Brown (2003) a female Muslim journalist who does not wear the *hijab*, comments on the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain, and how she sees the topic of the *hijab* as controversial. She commences by mentioning instances where the *hijab* has been in the news and then continues to show that there are differing views among the Muslim community with regards to the wearing of the *hijab*. According to Alibhai-Brown (2003) some ‘modernists’ who do not wear the *hijab* believe that it related to a specific time in history and today ‘what matters is how you feel inside’. Alibhai-Brown (2003) explains that the ‘literalists’ follow every word in the Qur’an, but comments that ‘… these “true” Muslims don’t ride camels through the streets of our cities (because that is what the Prophet did) or demand that British law should recognise polygamy and stoning for adultery’. The ‘literalists’ have modernised over some things, but not the issue of the *hijab*. Although she does include the views of a few women who wear the *hijab*, her article is written from the viewpoint that Muslim women should not wear the *hijab*.

*AFM (The UK's Premier Magazine for Asian Style and Fashion)* on the other hand take a very positive view of modernity. Davies and Darr (2003) reporting in the magazine highlight the good things about being a Muslim in the West and do not find that there is a conflict between being a Muslim and living in Britain. In fact they see a new breed of Muslims emerging that are showing how good it is to be a Muslim. Davies and Darr (2003) conclude with an interview with just one Muslim woman who was training to be a solicitor in Manchester. The woman claims that she has not experienced any animosity, but from the photographs that accompany the article it can be seen that although a Muslim, her dress is Westernised and she does not wear the
**hijab.** Clearly this is only one opinion and the article lacks an opposing view from a woman who does wear the *hijab* in Britain.

Another influential Muslim magazine is *Q News.* This Muslim magazine reports on the topical issues of the day, but appears to separate the contents of its magazines into themes. The January 2004 issue included an article about the headscarf ban in France, which set out the reasons for the proposed ban and how this may affect women in France. It included some explanations of why the *hijab* is worn by Muslim women, but mostly the article was a condemnation of the ban and the French government. *Q News* (2004) believed that the banning of the ‘religious symbols’ was really ‘about the headscarf’. The same issue included other articles on the wearing of the *hijab:* firstly, an article by a Turkish politician, Kavakci (2004), who had been forced out of her ‘elected position’ for failing to remove her *hijab;* secondly, Alvi (2004) writes of her experiences as a young Muslim girl wanting to wear the *hijab* to school when she was growing up in Bowden near Manchester; thirdly, Ebrahim-Khan (2004) wrote about the general status of Muslims in France, including women who wear the *hijab;* and fourthly, it included an article written by Mir (2004) on the choices facing all Muslim women regarding the wearing of the *hijab.*

*The Guardian* (2004) published a supplement entitled ‘Young, Muslim and British’, where they invited a group of Muslims to get together to discuss issues facing Muslims in Britain. The group were asked a number of questions including: *The widespread perception is that Islam discriminates against women. Why is that so?* The answers to this question dismiss the *hijab* and move onto a discussion of women in Islam. One woman in particular stated that:

> “We’re bored of talking about dress-codes,” said Shatha Khalil, a journalism graduate. “Everyone seems to think the hijab is a symbol of oppression. It’s our right. We’ve chosen it. Get over it.” (*The Guardian*, 2004, p.19).

Afshar (2008, p.411), a Muslim feminist sets out to argue that ‘… Islamophobia has burdened Muslim women who cover with additional problems in terms of their politics, their lived experiences and their life chances’. Exploring the context in which Muslim women now find themselves living as a result of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, Afshar (2008, p.412) also looks back in time to explain how many ideas attributed to
Muslims have been formed and references the work by Said (1978). Much of the hatred since the terrorist attacks have been focused on these women who cover and Afshar (2008, p.420) shows that often Muslim women who cover are pitied by Western women who believe that the women are being forced to cover, but this is not the case. According to Afshar (2008, p.421) the women that she spent time in conversations with explained how it was their choice to cover and sometimes the wearing of the scarf went against the wishes of the parents. Afshar (2008, p.422) outlines the Muslim women in history who have either held political power or have been influential in the past, including references to Mernissi (1997). Afshar (2008, p.423) explains how Muslim women gradually became educated and interpreted the scriptures for themselves instead of relying on men for this process and following what they said. Concluding by referring to Muslim women who convert to Islam and choose to wear the hijab, Afshar (2008, p.424) believes that ‘the hijab is a matter of faith and identity and a political act of solidarity, but not one that alienates them from their kin and communities’.

The London bombings of 7th July 2005 (7/7) happened after this research had been carried out and it was not until after this event that The Muslim News included debates on the wearing of the hijab in Britain. Journalists Khan (2005) and Akhtar (2005) both refer to the statement made by the late Dr Zaki Badawi who advised the women in light of the London bombings to remove their hijab. The articles react negatively to his suggestion and argue that Muslim women in Britain are not about to remove their headscarves because of this event. Both reporters concluded that the women should continue to wear their hijab, and how these events, and the words of the late Dr Badawi, had made some women stronger in their desire to wear the hijab.

Interviews with over fifty Muslim women, after 9/11 were carried out by Gehrke-White (2006) in the U.S.A. According to Gehrke-White (2006, p.2) some of the women interviewed had always worn the veil, as she refers to it, some did not wear the veil and liked to blend in, some had converted to Islam, some had come to the U.S.A. following persecution in other countries, and some who were ‘taking a public stand’. However, even though the women she interviewed came from differing backgrounds and had different life experiences Gehrke-White (2006, p.4) believed
that they all had education in common and ‘They also tend to be devout, pray regularly, and observe Ramadan and other Islamic holy times’.

Basing her empirical study on Muslims in the U.S.A. ‘over two decades’ is Haddad (2007, p.254), an historian of Islam, who identifies that the *hijab* is being worn by these Muslims for two reasons: firstly, to show their Islamic identity, and secondly to make sure that Islam remains a part of U.S. society. Even though many of women’s mothers had never worn the veil, these women are choosing to wear it to show that they are Muslims. Discussing the ‘War on Terrorism’ Haddad (2007, p.255) explains how the rights of women in Afghanistan or rather a women’s rights discourse was mobilised by Bush in order to persuade people of the legitimacy of the ‘War on Terror’, despite the issue being ignored years earlier. Haddad (2007, p.255) continues that when Kabul was liberated the U.S.A. could not understand why the women did not throw off their *burqas*. Haddad (2007, p.256) proceeds with a review of female Muslim scholars who have joined the debate regarding the use of the veil and lists the prominent authors including: Al-Hibri (1994); El-Guindi (1999); Mernissi (1987); Hoodfar (1997); Nashat (2003); and Arat (1998). Haddad (2007, p.260) shows how the East and its women have been negatively stereotyped over the years and how Christian missionaries and feminists have tried to save the Muslim woman, but at the same time have failed to educate themselves with regard to Islam and have managed to ignore the Muslim feminists.

Haddad (2007, p.262) states that post 9/11 some Muslim women took off the veil to avoid persecution, whereas others insisted on wearing it to show that they were followers of Islam and were not afraid to be seen as such, and even despite harassment these women continued to wear it. The evidence from her research also shows that since 9/11, the mosques in the U.S.A. and women’s groups have become more popular with Muslim women and have become a place where women can meet to share ideas and discuss their everyday lives. Haddad (2007, p.264) concludes by showing that Muslim women are becoming increasingly important in ‘altering public prejudice against Islam and Muslims’.
Examining ‘the recent emergence of popularity of the hijab’ in particular among women in the U.S.A. is Khan (2007, p.195), a lecturer in Islamic studies. According to Khan (2007, p.195) this renewed interest in the wearing of the scarf cannot just be attributed to a ‘rise in religious awareness’, and analyses the non-religious ‘variables’ that play a part in ‘a Muslim woman’s decision to cover or not’. Khan (2007, p.195) believes that the hijab, as well as being a sign of their religious commitment, is also a way for Muslim women to express ‘their own identity’ and ‘create space for themselves in the public arena’. Khan (2007, p.196) begins by looking at the discourse of the hijab in: Southeast Asia; Jordan; The Palestinian Territories; Algeria; and Western Europe (without mentioning Britain specifically) before documenting his research in the U.S.A. Khan (2007, p.209) interviewed fifty women who had put on the hijab following the 11th September attacks in the U.S.A. All were either born in the U.S.A. or moved there before they were five years old and were between the ages of twenty and thirty-two. The women were interviewed between November 2001 and February 2002 and were again interviewed in May 2006.

According to Khan (2007, p.202) between the 1960s and 1980s in the U.S.A., the women seen wearing the hijab were over the age of 50 and the hijab tended to indicate the age of a woman. By the 1990s the women wearing it were younger Muslim women who had been born in the U.S.A and after 11th September 2001 Muslim women were deciding whether to wear ‘such a visible symbol of their religious identity’ even if it was not necessarily religiously motivated (Khan 2007, p.203). Khan’s (2007 p.204) research shows that the wearing of the hijab was for the majority of those interviewed an ‘Assertion of Islamic Identity’ and that most of the women wearing the hijab were the first in their household to do so. Khan (2007, p.204-5) explains that many of these women had opposition from their family to their wearing of the hijab, due to fears for their safety, even though the women expressed a positive reaction from the public and felt that they had ‘Greater freedom in public (“Liberating”)’ when they wore it. Even at the follow-up interviews the majority of the women who had donned the hijab were still wearing it. Khan (2007, p.206) concludes that ‘It is the women’s own ruminations’ that leads them to decide whether they should be ‘veiling, unveiling or re-veiling’.
Although these studies offer a fascinating insight into the lives of Muslim women in the U.S.A, the work is not specifically focused on the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab*. As with the interviews carried out in Canada it leaves the necessity for this research that was carried out with Muslim women in Britain to show why women are choosing to put on the *hijab* or choosing not to wear it.

### 2.8. Conversion

Conversion of non-Muslims to Islam has become an increasingly researched topic since 9/11 and various authors (Robert 2006; van Nieuwkerk 2006; Allievi 2006; and McGinty 2006) can now be found detailing the lives of women who have chosen to follow Islam and put on the *hijab*, documenting the stories of these women and how they converted to Islam.

A *hijab* wearing convert to Islam, Robert (2006, pp.19-98) includes stories of the lives of converts in Britain who have chosen to wear the *hijab*. She begins with her own story and then continues by documenting the decisions that her friends made when converting to Islam. After exploring the challenges of becoming a Muslim she examines the wearing of the *hijab* and begins with the instructions found within the Qur’an. Robert (2006, p.182) also explains that in her view the *hijab* is not ‘merely a relic of Bedouin culture’ but ‘is Islamic’. She continues with the benefits that covering brings, and the changes that the women went through, before examining the move to wearing the *jilbab* and other forms of covering. Robert (2006, p.185) also narrates how the women are pleased to be identified as Muslims and how these women who covered ‘felt beautiful in the eyes of Allah’.

Another Muslim convert, van Nieuwkerk (2006, p.1), examines conversion and the reasons for it in a variety of countries around the world. Included in this is a narrative on the wearing of the *hijab* by Allievi (2006, p.120). He examines the reasons why converts choose to wear or not wear the *hijab* and includes testimonies from Muslim women with whom he carried out his research. Although some of the converts choose to wear the *hijab*, others decided not to, so as not to stand out in the society in which they live. According to Allievi (2006, p.132) the women who have converted talk about their decisions to wear the *hijab* in a more ‘authentically religious’ way as they
are not influenced by any ‘ethnocultural legacy’. Allievi (2006, p.146) finishes with some reflections on the wearing of the *hijab* and concludes that ‘often converts find Islam interesting’ and in many cases because of ‘its “Otherness”’.

Researching ‘Western Women’s Conversions to Islam’ McGinty (2006, p.14) interviewed six Swedish women and three women from the U.S.A. between 1998 and 2001, which just bridges the period of pre and post 9/11. Her book is about the women’s identities as Muslims, their own versions of Islam and covers all aspects of Islam, not just the wearing of *hijab*. With regard to the wearing of the *hijab*, McGinty (2006, p.111) explains how she gives an ‘overview of some general ideas and arguments about the *hijab*’, and also includes parts of the transcripts of the interviews that she carried out with the converts. McGinty (2006, p.165) explains that all of those interviewed had put on the *hijab* as part of their adoption of this new faith and although the women may now ‘endure discrimination and harassment’, this in turn confirms that the women have undergone a change that ‘might even strengthen her Muslim identity’.

Although these books were useful in the way that it documented how converts were embracing Islam, they do not explain why Muslim women in Britain who are already born into the religion are returning to the wearing of the *hijab*.

### 2.9. Dress and identity

A small selection of literature was examined on the topic of dress, identity and fashion to see if there was any correlation between the way the Muslim women in Britain dress and how fashion theorists viewed this subject.

Exploring the idea that clothes can say things about the people that are wearing them, and that ‘… this results typically in locating them symbolically in some structured universe of status claims and life-style attachments’ is Davis (1992, p.4). Davis (1992, p.9) discusses how styles and fashion can often be seen as a code, but these codes may be temporary and may say different things at different times rendering them difficult to interpret, the end result being that ‘… in semiotic terminology, the clothing sign’s signifier-signified relationship is quite unstable’.
Discussing ‘World Fashion, Ethnic, and National Dress’, Eicher and Sumberg (1995, p.295) look at how the media can affect fashion on a global scale and how being identified with a particular group in society can often be expressed through the clothing that people wear. They also include a section where they begin by saying that often women who choose to wear their type of ethnic dress have chosen to ignore the idea of fashion. Eicher and Sumberg (1995, p.300) explain how ‘Ethnic dress is the opposite of world fashion’ and that those who choose to wear it do so to ‘distinguish themselves from members of another by focusing on differentiation’. Eicher and Sumberg (1995, p.304) conclude by explaining that everyone is different and there is no guarantee that people living in the same area will necessarily choose to wear the same type of dress. Some choose to wear ethnic dress whereas others in the same area may choose to wear world fashion. Eicher and Sumberg (1995, p.304) also acknowledge that certain fashions can cause tension and mention the case of the veil in Iran where not wearing it was seen as ‘opposition to traditional values’ and once Ayatollah Khomeini took power it was the ‘Cosmopolitan dress’ that was ‘banned as a negative symbol of an undesirable world’.

Focusing on middle-class Muslim women who live in London, Tarlo (2007a, p.131) begins by saying that how these women dress often indicates differences, and is often the result of living in cities such as London where the women meet a variety of different cultures. Tarlo (2007a p.132) explains that by focusing on Muslim women in London, she will be looking at the way that the hijab makes women feel about themselves, but also how it affects their ‘relationships to others’. According to Tarlo (2007a, p.134), the hijab is usually associated with things hidden, whereas in Britain the wearing of the hijab can make you stand out as a Muslim woman. She then refers to the Pro-hijab conference that was held in London as a response to the banning of the wearing of the hijab in state schools in France, explaining how Britain is very tolerant of all forms of dress. Tarlo (2007a) writes that although it is easy to wear the hijab in London, it can also be difficult not to wear it.

The investigation by Tarlo (2007a, p.135) starts in a hairdressing salon in north-west London where she documents the life experiences of some of the women associated with the salon, who are not necessarily Muslims themselves, but have a connection to or an interest in Islam. Within this narrative Tarlo (2007a, p.139) explains how the
conversion of one client to the wearing of the hijab, directly influenced the non-Muslim owner of the salon to return to her Catholic church and move her young son to a Catholic school. The conversion, or more importantly the putting on of the hijab, caused the salon owner to become anxious about the effects that attending a multicultural school may have on her son. Tarlo (2007a, p.151) touches upon the idea that some do not see the hijab as religious dress, which tends to be worn under certain circumstances, but as something that must be worn on a permanent basis to show submission to God. There is also a mention of the fact that although ‘the hijab prevents certain interactions’ it also opens up a different set of interactions to the women, and includes a brief paragraph of the different fashions that can be worn. Tarlo (2007a, p.152) mentions that the women appear to judge each other on what is acceptable behaviour when wearing the hijab, and that the ‘amount of online chat’ that is attributed to the wearing of the hijab implies that Muslim women and non-Muslim women are both ‘preoccupied with their appearances’. However, according to Tarlo (2007a, p.152) ‘the claim’ that these women are not obsessed with their bodily appearance and ‘the pressures of competitive consumerism’ it to some extent true. The conclusion that Tarlo reaches is that even though the wearing of the hijab is a personal choice, there are influences that shape these decisions.

Including references to the hijab in Britain, Werbner (2007, p.171), a social anthropologist, begins by focusing on the problems faced by Muslim women of marriageable age, including forced marriages and domestic violence, particularly in Pakistan and the Punjab. She comments that putting on the veil often gives Muslim women the power to decide who they are going to marry even if sometimes this goes against the wishes of their parents. Werbner (2007, p.172) identifies that the wearing of the hijab is often associated with belonging to a certain class and makes reference to Dwyer (1999), including information from her writings on South Asians and Muslims and the use of the dupatta. Traditionally the wearing of a headscarf was connected to ethnicity, although Werbner (2007, p.172) goes on to say that the wearing of the ‘hijab in Britain’ is an expression of a ‘new’ identity and what the hijab means can differ from ‘individual to individual’. Werbner (2007, p.173) notes that the hijab was traditionally associated with the lower classes in Turkey, but is now being worn by ‘new social groups’, including those who want to be seen as ‘modern’. Reference is made to Gellner, who remarked ‘Contrary to what outsiders generally
suppose, the typical Muslim woman in a Muslim city doesn’t wear the veil because her grandmother did so, but because her grandmother did not’ (1992:16)’ (Werbner, 2007, p.173, italics in original).

According to Werbner (2007, p.175) the hijab can mean different things in different situations and she moves on to discuss the hijab ban in France and the forced wearing of the veil in Muslim countries before returning to the use of the veil in making spaces for the women to move around in Britain unhindered by parents and protected from unwanted advances from men. She continues by looking at the meaning of the hijab for those Muslims who choose to wear it or not wear it before moving on to compare the treatment of Muslims in Britain and France. Werbner (2007 p.177) explores how each country deals with issues that arise from minority groups living within the countries and refers to the work of Tarlo (2005) and the work of the Pro-hijab group, which as highlighted earlier, was set up as a response to the banning of the headscarf in France. Werbner (2007) concludes her article with a look at how ‘honour and shame’ are still important factors in the lives of some immigrants in Britain and that the wearing of the hijab is a ‘cunning solution’ to ‘appear to honour their parents’ and yet choose ‘their own destiny’ (Werbner, 2007, p.179, italics in original).

Looking at the rights of British Muslim women and how their Muslim identities enable them to obtain those rights is Brown (2006, p.417), who specialises in political Islam. The article begins with an exploration of the ‘Umma’ in Britain, but also globally, and the differences between culture and religion. Topics such as forced marriage; a right to personal security and family; and the right to education and employment are discussed and analysed, but there is only a minor reference to the role that the hijab plays in this. Reference is made to the wearing of school uniforms and how these accommodate the wishes of the Muslim community by ensuring modesty. The research by Dwyer (1999) with Muslim school girls is mentioned in relation to this, as is the hijab ban in France. Brown (2007, p. 427) concludes by referring to her own research in which the hijab was mentioned, stating that it ‘functioned in two ways’ as an expression of ‘their identity’ in public and as a way that the women could stay safe when out in public.
Ruby (2006, p.54) begins by explaining how the *hijab* is often viewed in Canada either as a ‘symbol of Muslim women’s oppression’ or as something that ‘empowers them’ by allowing them to have their own identities and be part of the Muslim community. Based on focus groups conducted with fourteen immigrant Muslim women in Saskatoon, Canada, Ruby (2006, p.55) shows that there are notable differences as to what the *hijab* means to them. Most of them agreed that the *hijab* in itself was not enough without the correct behaviour to go with it. This led on to a debate as to why the *hijab* was worn and a further analysis of the passages in the Qur’an. Ruby (2006, p.59) states: ‘While some women wear the *hijab* because they feel responsible for a moral society, others wear it because it offers them respect, dignity and protection’. Further narratives from the research are included showing evidence that there are examples of: women seeing the *hijab* as offering protection; women feeling that they are being shown more respect when they wear it; and women believing that they are showing commitment to their religion. It is also noted by Ruby (2006, p.59) that women who do not wear the *hijab* are often thought of as not being committed to their faith. Non-wearers included in this research, explain in their defence that the *hijab* is cultural rather than religious and that some wearers of the *hijab* (including an outer coat) need to cover when outside of the home because the clothes they wear underneath are too immodest to be shown. Ruby (2006, p.59) reports that some women also felt that it was a way of ‘demonstrating the difference between Muslim and Western values’.

Ruby (2006, p.60) proceeds to show how women in the West often wear the *hijab* as a sign that they are Muslim and belong to the Muslim community, even though this can bring with it negative stereotyping. Some of the participants explained that as members of this community, the wearing of the *hijab* prevented them from doing things and visiting places that would make the community look bad. Ruby (2006, p.61) explains that the women also spoke of how the *hijab* was not taken so seriously or worn as correctly in what they called ‘back home’ meaning the country from which they originated. Making reference to scholars who have attributed male control to the wearing of the *hijab*, Ruby (2006, pp.61-62) then goes further to talk about the *hijab* giving back power to Muslim women, giving examples of how they are freer to go about their everyday lives without harassment from men when they wear the *hijab*. Ruby (2006, p.63) notes how the media contributes to the view of Muslim women, by
only showing examples of oppression and describes how schools in Canada have sent home pupils for wearing the *hijab* and how racial harassment towards some participants has increased since 9/11. The article then charts the ‘negative portrayal of the *hijab* in the West’, showing how some people in the West thought that once Muslim women were free to do as they choose they would automatically remove their coverings, and gives examples of how this has not shown to be the case. Ruby (2006, p.64) concludes by explaining how the wearing of the *hijab* has increased in popularity, and in turn means different things to different women.

It will be important to see if the reasons behind the wearing of the *hijab* from my research touch on any of these ideas. Do the women wear the *hijab* to fulfil their religious obligations or is something else going on? Are they wearing it to assert their Muslim identity in a society where they are the minority group? Do the women interviewed attach ideas of fashion to the wearing of the *hijab*?

### 2.10. Veiling as fashion

In 2007, the journal *Fashion Theory* devoted several issues to Islamic dress. Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.133) begin by explaining that the journal has been devoted to this topic because there is a ‘lack of literature that engages with the relationship between religion and fashion’ and that those that are religious are often seen as having no interest in fashion. Moors and Tarlo (2007, pp.134-137) then discuss how these different practices can in some cases be connected to geographical locations, but also how the same item of dress can have different meanings depending on the context. A selection of Islamic countries are mentioned and comparisons are made. Examples of political circumstances are included and the terms used for items of Islamic dress are also explained. The wearing of Islamic fashion in countries where Muslims are a minority is also touched upon, including Britain, where according to Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.138) ‘there has been an upsurge in Islamic fashion’ where Muslim women have merged a variety of ‘styles that blend concerns with religion, modesty, politics, and identity with a creative engagement with both Western and Eastern fashions’. Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.140) finish by mentioning what they see as an increased Islamic consumer sector: how the media in various formats are advertising these products and how women in differing countries are adopting these forms of Islamic
dress. They conclude that there is a relation between ‘religion, fashion, and politics’ for many Muslim women and this is expressed through what they wear.

In *Emel: The Muslim Lifestyle Magazine* (2005) links can be found between the wearing of the *hijab* and being fashionable as the contents page lists items such as Women’s Fashion and Men’s Fashion under the collective title of Lifestyle. Although the Women’s Fashion section included advertisements of women wearing winter coats with their heads and faces out of view, *Emel: The Muslim Lifestyle Magazine* (2005) does start with a message to the readers ‘No need to compromise your style or comfort this winter. Keep warm and stylish wearing one of these luxurious coats’.

Examining the dress of three professional Muslim women in London who are in the public domain, Tarlo (2007b) introduces each of the women in relation to their work and then looks at the biographies of the women in turn. Starting with Rezia Wahid, she explores her background and attitudes to dress and Tarlo (2007b, p.154) concludes by describing her dress as ‘a subtle layering of garments’ and ‘two scarves, an under one and over one, usually in contrasting colors [sic] and made of subtle but interestingly textured and colored [sic] fabrics’. The second biography is that of a comedienne Shazia Mirza and begins with initial comparisons between Rezia and Shazia, before exploring Mirza’s childhood, her views on Muslim dress and the wearing of the *hijab* as part of her stand-up persona. Tarlo (2007b, p.159) explains that initially, ‘In effect, the *hijab* was for Shazia an extraordinarily powerful working tool. It was “her material” in every sense of the term’. In 2003 Shazia stopped wearing the *hijab* for her performances.

Thirdly, Tarlo (2007b) examines the life and influences of Humera Khan, who came from a Pakistani background, but wore Westernised clothes when she came to live in London. Tarlo (2007b, p.161) describes her current style of dress as ‘… bold *hijabs*’ worn with ‘shirts’ and ‘loose trousers’. She concludes with a summary of the effect that the *hijab* has had on these three women’s lives and the effects that it has had on others. In Tarlo’s view fashion, religion and politics are all interwoven when it comes to Islamic dress. Tarlo (2007b, p.170) finishes with the thought that these ‘new Islamic fashions’ could be ‘expressions of Islamic cosmopolitanism’.
Discussing the Razanne Muslim lifestyle doll, is Yaqin (2007, p.173) who states that it ‘is being marketed over the internet as a role model for Muslim girls living in the West’. Yaqin (2007, p.174) points out that ‘In minority contexts, Muslims feel obliged to perform their Muslimness through dress and other actions’ and this extends beyond Muslim women to the children’s toy market. There has been an increase in sales of such dolls since 9/11, and according to Yaqin (2007, p.177) sales of such items that promote the stereotype of a Muslim woman in the hijab can lead to women wearing the veil to show their ‘Muslimness’.

Dismissing the concept that there is ‘only one world fashion system dominated by the West’, is Akou (2007, p.403), an associate professor of fashion design who believes that with the increase in the use of the internet, Muslims in all parts of the world now have access to Islamic fashion. According to Akou (2007, p.405) those who do not live in Muslim countries where Islamic clothing is not readily available still have the same chances to purchase the same types of dress. The article then makes reference to Eicher and Sumberg’s (1995) argument that some groups use dress to distinguish themselves from other groups. Akou (2007, p.412) discusses internet shopping for Islamic fashion, and explains that this type of shopping has benefits for Muslim women as they are able to shop from home and the ‘modesty of the body is ensured’. She notes how some of the stores are clearly Islamic by their names whereas:

Other stores have slogans. Hijab al-Muminat offers “Islamic Fashion for the Believing Women.” Clothing at Hijab Boutique is “Modest by Nature,” and Muslim gear invites shoppers to “Believe in What You Wear.” Al-Sundus is where “modesty is in fashion.” (Akou, 2007, p.412)

The article then includes the results of the survey that Akou (2007, p.414) carried out mentioning that ‘70% of the websites’ that she looked at had an item of clothing ‘called hijab’. Akou (2007, p.414) makes reference to the use of the term hijab and explains that hijab ‘means “to cover” and yet when advertised for sale on the internet it always refers to ‘a head covering’. Akou (2007, p.418) concludes by questioning how long Muslim women will be able to continue to dress in a way that is ‘distinct from the West’, but comments that ‘these websites are opening many new possibilities’. Although based entirely on Islamic fashion and the internet this article has highlighted some issues that will be relevant to this research on women in Britain. If they have access to a computer, they are no longer restricted to what is available on
the high street or clothes that they make for themselves out of necessity instead of choice.

Some of the internet sites such as ‘Hijab al-Muminat’ as mentioned by Akou (2007, p.412), also give helpful hints as to why the hijab should be worn and link the wearing of the latest style of hijab to being fashionable. The idea that the hijab is old fashioned and out of date is being dispelled by these internet sites that are all advertising the styles of the hijab that could be worn to fit in with the twenty-first century fashions.

Lewis (2007, p.423), a cultural studies professor explores the wearing of headscarves by shop assistants in London and begins by explaining that she is ‘linking veils to fashion’ to analyse the ‘spatial relations that are socializing and ethnicizing’. Describing the varieties of Islamic dress that can be seen along Oxford Street in London, Lewis (2007, p. 425) goes on to argue that by linking ‘shopping, fashion, and veils’ she instantly grabs the interest of a wider range of women, as these concepts are not often linked and are often seen ‘as a temporal clash’. Explaining that although ‘revivalist identities’ are opposed to ‘Western consumption’, Lewis (2007, p.425) continues that they are not opposed to the increase in sales of various forms of Islamic fashion that is now available to Muslim women. Proceeding to map the rise of the female as a consumer, Lewis (2007) shows how as women move in and out of differing places they show different parts of their identities. However, according to Lewis (2007, p.426) those women who do veil are often seen by a ‘non-veiling and non-Islamic audience’ who assume that these women are Muslim when they could be ‘Hindus or Sikhs’.

Charting the use of the veil from its pre-Islamic origin to being associated with the harem, Lewis includes misconceptions that are associated with the veil, explaining that in some areas of the World ‘the veil’ can show the ‘status’ of a person rather than how religious they are and according to Lewis (2007, p.428) ‘there is no single garment that equates to the veil’. Lewis (2007, pp.429-432) outlines the influence of Western consumerism on the ‘Ottoman sultans’ and ‘Ottoman-style leaders’ and the history of the shopping habits of Muslim women beginning in the 1850s and 1860s, through to Hoda Shaarawi in the 1890s and to Turkey in the 1920s, before returning
to the uniform codes worn by shop assistants. Lewis (2007) then includes four instances where the veil has made the headlines. Lewis (2007, p.433), citing http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldjudgmt.htm, begins with the court case instigated by Shabina Begum who wanted to wear the jilbab to her local school, and Lewis (2007, p.434), citing http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/10/06/nveils106.xml also includes the Jack Straw controversy and his desire to meet women without the niqab. Lewis (2007, p.434), citing The Independent November 10 2006:23 also includes two court cases concerning Muslim women and the wearing of the niqab in their places of employment.

In the final section Lewis (2007, p. 436) looks at the use of veiling in Turkey and then moves on to identify the ‘Muslim lifestyle media’ that expose the women to variations of veiling in Britain and explains that ‘… most Muslim women wear the veil in conjunction with non-Islamic fashion’. However, Lewis (2007, p.436) citing Leshkowich and Jones (2003) warns that some Muslim women could find themselves unfashionable and that divisions could arise between those who wear the veil because it is fashionable to do so and those who wear it ‘as habit’. Lewis (2007, p.437) concludes with the pros and cons of wearing the veil as a shop assistant in Britain and the influence that the wearing of the veil may have on the consumers entering the shop. Lewis (2007, p.438) finishes by saying that the ‘veil’ gives the wearer an ‘alarming hypervisibility’ and yet these women ‘operate within overlapping spatialities and mutually constituting dress systems’ and applying this knowledge may go some way to solving the ‘bewildering challenges of dress politics in postcolonial Britain’.

Beginning with an explanation that although Muslim women have always been influenced by fashion, it was usually restricted to the garments worn when only family members or women were present, is Moors (2007, p.320). Moors (2007, p.321) shows that fashionable styles are now emerging in women’s outer garments and the women in San’a are linking ‘their dressing styles to authentic San’ani traditions, to ideological and religious convictions, and to matters of style and aesthetics’. Describing the different types and styles of outer garment that can be seen on the streets of San’a, the capital of Yemen, Moors (2007, p.326) goes on to explain how the different styles have been worn over the years by women of different social
groupings and how the styles brought in to San’a from other countries has had an influence on what the women are wearing. The outer garments of the women have slowly evolved over the years to become more fashionable and ‘elegant’ amid some criticism in the booklets advising women how to dress. While some of the changes have been slow other changes to keep up with fashion are rapid. Moors (2007, p.328) explains how the ‘Maqramas and large square headscarves’ could be changed to make sure that the person wearing it was considered to be ‘up to date with fashion’, but explains that it is the wearing of the face-veil that has undergone the most change.

Starting in the 1970s according to Moors (2007, p.328) some women decided not to cover their faces in public, using the argument that it was not a religious obligation for the face to be covered. However, Moors (2007, p.332) discovered that women will still put on a face-veil if it suits them to do so and not because it is a ‘religious obligation’ but because it is a custom of San’a. When the women travelled abroad, often the dress codes were readily changed, with some women explaining that if they covered their faces it would draw more attention to themselves. Moors (2007, p.338) explains that the styles of face veil worn in San’a have also changed over the years. In the 1990s, “being fashionable” became more central in how women were speaking about covering the face. When explaining the evolution of Islamic dress and the development of the term ‘Islamic fashion’, Moors (2007, p.341) includes a quote from Wilson (1985), which explains that fashion is forever changing and even those who choose to be unfashionable are making a statement against what is fashionable. Relating this to the women of San’a, Moors (2007, p.342) moves to the idea that what you wear is not only a way of communicating with others, but has an effect of how you feel about yourself. She concludes by saying ‘While dress impacts on women’s bodies and souls, women also do things with dress’.

Post 9/11 the concept of fashion was also being attached to the wearing of the hijab in some of the articles in the British press. Reporting on the wearing of the hijab after 9/11, journalist Barton (2002) comments on how the women she spoke to wanted to wear the scarf, and notes that some of the scarves came from high street shops with the important issue being that your scarf matches your outfit. The women she interviewed were happy to wear a fusion between Eastern and Western fashion and by
choosing carefully they believed that it was possible to wear the latest fashion of Islamic dress.

Explaining how she is a non-Muslim who has chosen to wear the *hijab*, White (2003) begins by including the negative stereotypes associated with the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain and then explains that ‘the barrier that the *hijab* creates’ is the main reason why she has chosen to adopt this form of dress. As well as the privacy the *hijab* offers, she explains the financial benefits of not giving to the homeless, being ignored by muggers, and gaining discounts from Muslim traders. Following this she comments briefly on the use of head coverings by other religions such as: Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism, before mentioning feminism in passing. White (2003) links the ‘militant feminists’ of the 1970s with those who wear the *hijab*, as they are women who have renounced the idea of being fashionable and attracting males. She explains that the *hijab* rejects the ‘Western notions of beauty’ and is liberation from the wearing of Western fashion. Will the women interviewed for this research also feel this way about wearing the *hijab* and the perceived benefits that are attributed to the wearing of it?

### 2.11. Summary

Muslims and non-Muslims have produced a significant amount of literature about Islamic dress and the *hijab* and since 9/11 the amount written has increased. Some Muslim authors traditionally wrote about the rules and regulations relating to the wearing of *hijab* whereas other authors do not see the wearing of the *hijab* as an obligation. Some believe that the *hijab* can be removed in front of people whom you are allowed to marry, whereas others believe that one should not uncover even in front of female non-Muslims.

The politics of the veil shows how the *hijab* has been worn in different countries sometimes for political purposes and as an act of rebellion. Muslim feminists who have analysed the wearing of the *hijab* believe that women should be free to make their own choices whether to wear the *hijab* or not and should not have the *hijab* forced up them.
Writings on the *hijab* in the West prior to 9/11 included evidence of discrimination, racial abuse and problems faced by girls at school. However, some positive aspects are shown including a renewed interest in the wearing of the *hijab* that started in the 1990s. Some writings on the *hijab* in the West post-9/11 have focused completely on the wearing of the *hijab* and the onset of Islamophobia since 9/11 whereas other research since 9/11 has focused on converts to Islam, giving an insight into the lives of these women.

Veiling as fashion has latterly come to the forefront. A relationship between fashion, religion and politics has been identified with some women finding themselves in fashion whereas others by the type of dress they wear have found themselves unfashionable. Traditionally it was the inner garments that were chosen due to the influences of fashion, it is now style of the outer garments that depicts how fashionable you are.

As a contribution to this field of work it is now important to discover the reasons why Muslim women in Britain choose to wear or not wear the *hijab*. Is the wearing of it a sign of political or feminist rebellion or is the wearing of it just a desire to fulfil what they see as their religious obligations and been identified as Muslims? Are Muslim women in Britain wearing it to assert their Muslim identity, and has the renewed interest in the religion led to women putting on the *hijab* to return to what they see as pure Islam? Where are the women sourcing their clothing from and are they conscious of being involved in this increased desire for Islamic fashion?
Chapter Three: Religion and Choice

3.1. Introduction

Muslim women are faced with a number of choices about what to wear and when to wear it. It is widely accepted that the instructions regarding the wearing of the hijab came from the Prophet Muhammad, and can be found in the Qur’an, the Hadith, or the Sunnah, and that knowledge of these rules is an important part of the process with regard to the wearing of the hijab. However, this is not always the main reason for the women’s decisions with regards to dress.

Although the media focus is on those who do cover, not all Muslims see the wearing of the hijab as an obligation, or believe that following the interpretations of the rules in the Qur’an is necessary. Not all Muslim women’s mothers wear the scarf or indeed encourage their daughters to wear it and those women who are not brought up amongst women wearing the hijab, can see around them examples of women who believe that one can still be a practising Muslim without covering one’s head.

For some women from the older generation the removal of the hijab or the chance not to wear it had been the ideal when they were younger, and similarly those who had moved from areas of the world where the wearing of the hijab was enforced, often seized upon the chance not to wear the hijab.

What now needs to be established is what is really going on when it comes to making these decisions. Is it really the choice of the women? What academic theories can be applied to the women’s assertion of choice? How does talk of choice relate to their lives in late modernity?

3.2. Rational Choice Theory

To really understand what is going on in the minds of Muslim women it is pertinent to look at the work of scholars who have already theorised about the notion of choice. Writers such as Stark and Bainbridge (1987), Iannaccone (1990, 1995), Chaves (1995) Bruce (1993, 1999) and Sherkat (1997) have all applied rational choice theory
to religion to identify why people make their religious choices. Using their theorising and applying it to the data gathered from this research is it possible to see why individuals make their religious choices with regards to the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab?

According to Iannaccone (1995, p.77), a professor of economics, rational choice theory is based on the economic theory put forward by ‘Gary Becker (1976:5)’. This economic theory is based on the idea that people make rational choices and that these choices will bring benefits. They will act rationally and when making a choice they will choose the option that will bring them the most benefits. Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.25) both sociologists, base their ‘Theory of Religion’ on this economic theory to try to establish the answers to questions they pose including: Why do humans develop religion? By basing their religious theory on the economic theory they believe that they can further understand the actions of individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs and affiliations. Data from this research can be examined, drawing on rational choice theory, to examine whether the wearing or not of the hijab is a rational choice.

Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.26, italics in original), start this process by using four descriptors: axioms (A); propositions (P); definitions, (Def); and elements. They continue to explain that axioms, are ‘inspired by the observation of the world’; propositions are ‘statements that are derived from these axioms’; definitions ‘are statements that link the axioms and propositions to the empirical world’; and elements are variables, concepts or simply things. According to Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.27) their first axiom or ‘A1’ is that ‘Human perception and action take place through time, from the past into the future’, with the ‘Def.1’ being that the past is already known and the future not known, but can be influenced. The second axiom or ‘A2’ is that ‘Humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and avoid what they perceive to be costs’, with the ‘Def.3’ being that ‘Rewards are anything humans will incur costs to obtain’ and ‘Costs are whatever humans attempt to avoid’ (Stark and Bainbridge 1987, p.27, italics in original). This then leads them to their proposition ‘P1’ that ‘Rewards and costs are complementary: a lost or forgone reward equals a cost, and an avoided cost equals a reward’. Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.28) explain that their third axiom or ‘A3’ is that ‘Rewards vary in kind, value and generality’ and
they reach the proposition ‘P2’ that ‘Sometimes rewards can be obtained at costs less than the cost equivalent to foregoing the reward’. Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.29) continue with the fourth axiom or ‘A4’ that ‘Human action is directed by a complex but finite information-processing system that functions to identify problems and attempts solutions to them’. This time three propositions are developed by Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.30): ‘P3 In solving problems, the human mind must seek explanations’; ‘P4 Explanations are rewards of some level of generality’; and ‘P5 Explanations vary in the costs and time they require for the desired reward to be obtained’.

Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.36) also talk of compensators and come up with the propositions: ‘P15 Compensators are treated by humans as if they were rewards’; ‘P16 For any reward or cluster of rewards, one or more compensators may be invented’; ‘P17 Compensators vary according to the generality, value, and kind of the rewards for which they substitute’; and Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.39) ‘P22 The most general compensators can be supported only by supernatural explanations’.

The idea of rewards and compensators put forward by Stark and Bainbridge (1987), has according to Bruce (1999, p.34), a sociologist, been built ‘on the premisses [sic] that are substantively atheistic’. He comes to this conclusion by first looking at the meaning of the terms rewards and compensators. A reward explains Bruce (1999, p.32) ‘is anything someone is prepared to expend costs to obtain’ whereas a compensator may not only incur a cost to obtain, but may be a ‘… promise of a future reward and an explanation …’ (Bruce, 1999, p.32, italics in original) of how you can obtain that reward. For Bruce ‘if compensators are also rewards’ the process of accepting a compensator if a reward is not available ‘becomes circular’ and this, Bruce (1999, p.32) claims, ‘undermines any force in the claim that people treat compensators as rewards’. He continues to explain that if people are unable to secure rewards immediately, they will ‘accept explanations’ as to how they can get them in the future providing there are ‘procedures’ that can to be followed in order to obtain them. Bruce (1999, p.33, italics in original) also suggests that if rewards are ‘impossible to secure and the explanation accepted instead;’ people may ‘seek the reward in a new location’. Bruce (1999) therefore sees Stark and Bainbridge’s (1987) ideas of rewards and compensators as problematic. Rewards to Stark and Bainbridge
(1987) according to Bruce (1999, p.33) need to be ‘tangible, concrete, and immediate’ whereas Bruce believes that rewards such as old age are ‘not sought immediately’ and according to Bruce they have ‘implicitly assumed too simple a model of reward’. He concludes by saying:

For Stark and Bainbridge religion is inherently faulty and can be desired only as compensation for an unavailable something that is better because it is this-worldly and immediate. (Bruce, 1999, p.34)

3.3. Rational Choice Theory and Religion

Iannaccone (1990) is a champion of applying an economic approach to religion and in his critique of rational choice theory he examines the concepts of household production and human capital, and relates these ideas to show how religious practice can be based upon these concepts. Iannaccone (1990, p.298) explains how this ‘household production approach, sometimes called “the new home economics,” was pioneered by Gary Becker in the early 1960s’. Iannaccone (1990, p.299) examines how inputs to religious production can be measured and can include goods that are bought such as religious attire. He also explains that a variety of activities including praying, meditating, and reading scriptures can be measured as inputs. Iannaccone (1990, p.299) points out that participants of a religion ‘invoke their own skills and experience to produce religious satisfaction’ and do not always rely upon the religious leader for advice and information. These skills that the faith members exhibit are listed as: religious knowledge; familiarity with (church) ritual and doctrine; and friendships with other worshippers. He continues to explain this in more detail to show that these skills and experiences that he calls ‘religious human capital’ are connected with a person’s enjoyment and continuation of their faith. The more worshippers invest in relationships with other faith members and learn the doctrines, rituals and traditions associated with the faith the more satisfaction they will receive as participants. Iannaccone (1990, p.300) continues his approach to show that the economic model can be tested by examining four important issues: denominational mobility; conversion; religious intermarriage and religious participation.
Bruce (1993, p.193) in his critique of economic explanations of religious behaviour is clearly against the idea of ‘applying a rational choice model to religious behavior [sic]’ and sets out to discuss the idea that Iannaccone’s (1990) theories would still hold true without being attached to economic theories. Bruce (1993, p.194) states that ‘by ignoring culture, the economic approach produces such a distorted view of religious behavior [sic] that the only context in which it could be viable is a thoroughly secular society’. Bruce (1993) lays out his views on using economic theories to explain religious behaviour before examining each of Iannaccone’s (1990) theories in turn. Bruce (1993, p.197) claims that Iannaccone (1990) has chosen ‘a selection of those indices of religious behavior [sic] that best fit the propositions’.

In terms of denominational mobility, according to Iannaccone (1990, p.300) ‘religious training, … is received directly from parents and from the religious institutions they support’. From an economic viewpoint, people will remain within the religion they grew up in or stay close to it as they have already invested time and effort into learning the finer points of that religion, and that to move away from the religion would incur costs in both time and effort that had already been spent. The sociological view, explains Bruce (1993, p.198) is that how a person grows up will ‘shape our receptivity to future alternatives’ and therefore the religious education and exposure that we receive as we grow up influences how we see things as adults. Therefore, Iannaccone (1990) may be correct, but Bruce (1993) believes we can explain this without ‘economic metaphors’.

Using the economic model, Iannaccone (1990, p.301) believes that conversion takes place at an early age ‘as people search for the best match between their skills and the context in which they produce religious commodities’, with the assumption being that as time goes by the rewards of moving to another religion would diminish. Bruce (1993, p.199) however, does not believe that this ‘offers a severe test of the theory’, since the same data could show that it is more to do with who you interact with and how an individual would see ‘the world and one’s place in it’.
In relation to religious intermarriage and participation, in Iannaccone’s (1990, p.303) view ‘Partners of the same religion can produce religious commodities more efficiently’. This simplifies the running costs of belonging to a religion as transportation is shared, money is given to one organisation and there is no doubt as to which religion the children will belong. Iannaccone (1990, p.303) also found evidence that there were higher rates of church attendance amongst same faith marriages.

Bruce (1993, p.199) agrees with the data that shows that people tend to marry others of the same faith, but believes that it is not to do with economics and can be given a much simpler explanation in that ‘churches provide an excellent venue for meeting young people who are similar not only in religion but also in social class, culture and ethnic background’.

In conclusion Iannaccone (1990, p.312) states that although the economic concepts do not tell us what ‘religion “really” is’ they do show us a great deal about ‘religious participation’. The economic model backed by empirical research identifies that people born into a particular religion will often stay within that religion and make choices that fit with the human capital that has already been expended. Within this Iannaccone (1990, p.313) states that ‘Religious upbringing, probably the most important source of religious human capital, is a major determinant of religious belief and behavior [sic]’.

Bruce (1993, p.201) adds that the economic approach shows little understanding of the behaviour that it is trying to explain and what might be a ‘reward’ for one person may be an ‘unbearable cost’ for another. He expands this by saying that the only way of ‘identifying cost or reward’ is from those who make the choices, but it is ‘those choices that we wish to explain’. It is the claim that the economic model is useful for understanding religious belief and behaviour that Bruce (1993, p.203) takes issue with. In his view ‘economic or rational choice models of behavior [sic] depend on us knowing what the rational choice is’.
In response to the critiques of his previous work Iannaccone (1995) has reviewed the rational choice approach to religion and in his work makes reference to Bruce’s criticisms. According to Iannaccone (1995, p.77) in any given situation people will work out their costs and benefit and will act in a way that will ‘maximize their net benefits’. In the same way people will ‘… choose what religion, if any, they will accept and how extensively they will participate in it’. Iannaccone (1995, p.78) voices the view of a number of scholars who bemoan the fact that ‘little theorizing about religion’ is taking place and that:

Rational choice seeks to fill this gap by integrating numerous predictions within a single conceptual framework and providing theoretical explanations for observed empirical regularities. (Iannaccone, 1995, p.78)

In particular Iannaccone makes reference to the costs and benefits of belonging to a religion and believes that you cannot examine these issues without asking about the money that people spend on their religion. Iannaccone (1995, p.80) also believes that the amount of time spent on religion has been neglected in the past and that rational choice needs to know about time and money spent and the consequences. ‘The value of cost-benefit models will remain hard to assess (but impossible to dismiss) until we begin asking people what they have sacrificed for the sake of their faith’.

Scholars have looked at religion from every angle, according to Iannaccone (1995, p.86), including: ‘socialization, indoctrination, neurosis, cognitive dissonance, tradition, deviance, deprivation, functionalism, the role of emotions, the impact of culture, and more’. However, Iannaccone (1995, p.86) believes that rational choice offers a ‘high rate of return’ as it gives the chance to look at religion as a ‘product of cost-benefit decisions’ and will ‘benefit those seeking to build and test models of religious behavior [sic]’.

Chaves (1995), a specialist in the sociology of religion, looks at Iannaccone’s (1990, 1995) work and dissects his theories to come to his own conclusions. Chaves (1995, p.99) sets out to argue ‘… that individuals engage in cost-benefit analysis so as to maximize their benefits – is in fact a very weak assumption.’ He also sets out to show that when examining the rational choice approach ‘it is better to evaluate particular instances of it’ instead of looking for reasons to ‘endorse or abandon’ the whole approach. By approaching religion from a cost-benefit assumption, Chaves (1995,
p.99, italics in original) believes that this really tells you ‘nothing about actual empirical religious phenomena or behavior [sic]’. Chaves (1995, p.99) notes that the rational choice argument can only offer predictions if other assumptions about the world are made. This approach does not help us to ‘predict’ the choices that an individual will make and to help us achieve this we would need to know ‘the context in which he or she is making choices’.

Looking at Iannaccone’s (1990) example of denominational mobility and his ‘religious capital argument’, according to Chaves:

If only very small investments in religious capital were needed to maximize satisfaction, then the relationship between past religious practice and present choices could not plausibly be interpreted as working via a human capital mechanism…’. (Chaves, 1995, p.100)

The deductive theory originally put forward by Stark and Bainbridge (1987) according to Chaves (1995, p.102) is not in fact ‘a deductive theory’ at all. In Chaves’ (1995) opinion the way that Stark and Bainbridge (1987) talk of axioms, definitions and propositions is a way of achieving clarification when arguing and writing, but does not in itself provide a logical deduction. Also according to Chaves (1995, p.103) ‘The microlevel assumptions’ that Iannaccone uses in his ‘analysis of religious human capital’ are, ‘different than the microlevel assumptions’ that he uses when looking at issues of ‘church and sect’. Chaves (1995, p.104) concludes that some rational choice explanations may be true but it would be better to compare a ‘rational choice explanation of X to other explanations of X’ to distinguish between those claims that are true and those that are not.

3.4. Rational Choice Theory and Social Constraints

Sherkat (1997, p.66), a sociologist, outlines a ‘theory of religious choice which focuses on individual preferences’. He proposes that with consumption, preferences become stronger and compares this as similar to the human capital perspective put forward by Iannaccone (1990). However, Sherkat (1997, p.66) states that ‘individual preferences are not the only factors which motivate religious choices’ and that ‘presentations of rational models of religious behaviour fails to capture social
influences on religious choices’. According to Sherkat (1997, p.67) rational choice theory does not explain ‘where preferences for religious goods come from’ and to find out the answer to this scientists need to know ‘what is going on inside people [sic] heads’. Sherkat (1997, p.67) believes that ‘… social influences on choice constrain individual options and create a gap between individual preferences and revealed choices’. According to Sherkat:

Social relations determine the choices individual’s [sic] can make, the preferences individuals have, the types of religious goods offered, and changes in religious products over time. (Sherkat, 1997, p.68)

These ‘preferences’, according to Sherkat and emphasised by Bruce (1993) are learned through the experiences that an individual has had, and also through ‘socialization’. Therefore, according to Sherkat (1997, p.70) when it comes to religious choices it is those childhood experiences that ‘shape what individuals desire’ when they become adults. Sherkat (1997, p.70) relates this to ‘Iannaccone’s (1990) human capital approach’ but explains how his view of ‘religious preferences’ differs; in his opinion, it is not the ‘household production of religious values’ that is the ‘central stabilizing force’. Sherkat (1997, p.71) believes that it is more often the case that individuals ‘learn new religious preferences’ from others, and that those people we associate with often recommend a number of products that they have tried, and according to Sherkat, religion works in the same way. Sherkat (1997, p.71) includes a reference to ‘John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965, p.871)’ that states ‘…final conversion amounts to the acceptance of the “opinions of one’s friends,” they are providing an example of learning new preferences’.

In previous research, Sherkat (1997, p.71) has shown that those children who were taught their ‘religious beliefs by their parents’, and were close to their parents are ‘more likely to accept their religious teachings’ and ultimately it is this religious preferences of an individual that informs their choice of religion in the future. Continuing from this, according to Sherkat (1997, p.74) is the idea that people often make religious choices in order to please or displease others, and will often continue with their religious attendance in adult life in order to set a good example to their own children. When it comes to ‘social sanctions’ and the reactions of others we can ‘alter the choices we make, they do not change our preferences’.
These ‘sanction-based rational choice models’ explains Sherkat (1997, p.75) is why people belong to certain groups which can in turn enable individuals to gain ‘rewards or punishments’. For example, the person may not be interested in the teachings of the religion, but going to church on a Sunday may give them ‘friendships, access to mating markets, a place on the basketball team, confirmation of social legitimacy’. Sherkat (1997, p76) mentions ‘religious monopolies’ as another example of where religious choices ‘are not necessarily made for religious reasons’ and where there may be no other choice for an individual but to join. He explains how choices can also be influenced when there are social ties connected to a particular religion, ‘… when family, religion, employment, ethnicity, neighbourhood, and the like are entangled’.

3.5 Family

Academics such as Crockett and Voas (2006), Voas (2010) and Guest (2010) have carried out studies to examine the influence that time and the family have on a person’s religious life. Crockett and Voas (2006, p.578) using The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and The British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey studied religious transmission amongst Christians and concluded that ‘religiosity has almost halved in a single generation’. According to Crockett and Voas (2006, p.578) ‘the BSA and BHPS evidence suggest that the social forces that determine religiosity, and have caused decline, operate on children rather than adults’. Crockett and Voas (2006, p.579) explain how immigration and ethnic minorities are often ‘more religiously active than the national average’ but showed that there was still a ‘substantial generational decline’. Voas (2010, p.25) explores the idea that ‘Age’ is the most important factor when looking at religious difference and questions ‘why young people are different’. When seeking to explain these differences between the generations Voas (2010, p.28) states that ‘For decade after decade in most developed countries, people have become less religious (at least in a conventional sense) than their parents’. He then goes on to with the explanation that even though some parents are still practising their religion their adult children are not. This according to Voas (2010, p.28) raises the issue of why these adults have not passed on this religious importance to their children and the ages at which this ‘religious socialisation’ is passed on. Voas (2010, p.28) then goes on to state that ‘… religious involvement may only stabilise when people reach their mid-20s …’ but continues to explain that this
does not mean that only young adults should be focused on, as this stability may coincide with a person leaving home and leading their own life away from their parents. Returning to the transmission of faith, Voas (2010, p.29) examines firstly the changes in ‘parental values’, showing that the most likely explanation is ‘… that parental values have become more liberal or relativistic, so that transmitting religion no longer seems critically important’ and that ‘… parents feel less need to socialise their children religiously’. Secondly, Voas (2010, p.30) looks at the ‘Change in young adults’ by examining what he calls ‘Compositional change’ where he talks of the effect that ‘higher education, employment for women and childbearing’ have on church attendance and ‘Contextual change’ which is a ‘shift in values, away from tradition and respect for authority’. Finally, Voas (2010, p.31) mentions ‘Other factors’ that play a part in the transmission of religious ideas. He mentions Iannaccone (1991) and Stark and Finke (2000) who believe that the ‘supply of religion’ is connected to ‘the level of religious involvement’ and other scholars of what he calls the ‘rational choice’ tradition’ who ‘emphasise the role of secular competition’.

Divorce is mentioned as having a disruptive effect on church attendance and according to Voas (2010, p.31) ‘Geographical mobility’ is seen as having ‘positive or negative effects on churchgoing’, if a person moves to a new area, they may attend a church to become part of the community or they may leave their old ‘habits’ behind and make new choices.

In his research with children of the Clergy, Guest (2010) examines the effect that being brought up in a religious household has had on the individuals. He states that:

In response to a sociological drift towards emphasising the sovereign individual actor (e.g. Giddens 1991), other research has affirmed the importance of the family as an enduring influence over the values individuals profess in adulthood (Bengtson et al. 2002). 

Referring to the work done by Pierre Bourdieu and his idea of ‘religious capital’ (knowledge that only the priesthood has), and Verter’s idea of ‘spiritual capital’ (knowledge that the priesthood and other religious officials may possess), Guest (2010, p.177) explains that: ‘It is important to note that a capital-based approach to understanding religious values is not unproblematic’ as some do not like to attribute economic terms to ‘explain religious phenomena’ and that ‘… the distinguishing
qualities of religion are not done justice by a set of metaphors based on material acquisition and exchange’. Guest (2010, p.178) along with Davis then apply this idea to families of the clergy as they wanted to find out how the values from their childhood which they termed ‘spiritual capital’ had influenced their ‘professional and religious development’. From their research they found that 75% of the respondents claimed that they were Christians and at some point in their lives ‘almost three-quarters…had worked in the caring/nurture professions’. Guest (2010, p.180) concludes that ‘… religious institutions enjoy a kind of social influence beyond the professed beliefs and practices of their members, channelled through the families of their leaders’. Rather than these children turning away from the faith they grew up with, Guest (2010, p.180) suggests that a ‘transformation’ occurs and that the values learnt in childhood are put to use in a variety of ways in adulthood.

3.6. Lifestyle choices

Sociologist Giddens (1991) who sees religion more as the remnants of tradition, discusses the idea of choice in relation to ‘Modernity and Self-Identity’.

Obviously, no culture eliminates choice altogether in day-to-day affairs, and all traditions are effectively choices among an indefinite range of possible behaviour patterns. (Giddens 1991, p.80)

According to Giddens (1991, p.80) although modernity allows an individual ‘a complex diversity of choices’, there is often no advice given as to which options should be taken. He looks at the idea of lifestyles not in the ‘glossy magazine’ sense but talks about the lifestyles that we all follow. Giddens (1991, p.81) believes that we are forced to follow lifestyles and that ‘we have no choice but to choose’. It is these lifestyles that we follow that ‘give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity’. Giddens (1991, p.81) explains how these lifestyles consist of a set of routines, one of which is dress, and these routines ‘are reflexively open to change’ when people are negotiating their own ‘self-identity’. For example, it is the choices that people make each day with regards to dress that make up these routines. He emphasises that these choices ‘… are decisions not only about how to act but who to be’.
According to Giddens (1991, p.81) these lifestyle choices apply to the working environment as well as to the non-working; people often have a choice in the work that they do, although people’s ‘styles of behaviour’ are limited in the work place. However, he goes on to comment on how not all choices are available to everyone. Giddens (1991, p.82) continues to explain how a lifestyle is a set of habits that are chosen by an individual and that a person who is ‘committed’ to their chosen lifestyle, would make choices that are in line with it. However, ‘the selection or creation of lifestyles is influenced by group pressures and the visibility of role models, as well as by socioeconomic circumstances’.

Four influences have been noted by Giddens (1991) that have an impact on the ‘plurality of choices’ that are open to individuals in situations of ‘high modernity’. The first influence is noted as ‘the fact of living in a post-traditional order’ and according to Giddens (1991, p.82) this means that many ‘signposts established by tradition’ have gone, leaving individuals a multitude of alternatives from which they can choose. The second influence as stated by Giddens (1991, p.83), citing Berger (1974) is the ‘pluralisation of life-worlds’, where the ‘dominance of the local community’ has now disappeared in many post-modern cultures. People no longer live in situations where those people around them are a ‘comparable type’. As these people move through different social environments, according to Giddens (1991, p.83), they may feel uncomfortable when their own lifestyle is questioned. ‘Lifestyle choices’ can become segmented and a person does certain activities at certain times during the week or at weekends. The third influence according to Giddens (1991, p.83) is the ‘… existential impact of the contextual nature of warranted beliefs under conditions of modernity’. Fourthly, according to Giddens (1991, p.85) with the ‘globalisation of media’ a variety of social environments are now visible to anyone who looks for the ‘relevant information’. The influence on ‘lifestyle choices’ is universal, despite how ‘limiting the social situations of particular individuals or groups may be’.

In relation to self-identity Giddens (1991, p.99) moves on to discuss how the body has a special part to play. The appearance of a person including: ‘modes of dress and adornment’ are ‘ordinarily used as clues to interpret actions’. According to Giddens (1991, p.99) dress is way of showing ‘individualisation’ and can be a way of showing
your ‘gender, class position and occupational status’. Giddens (1991, p.99) also states that dress can be influenced by a number of factors including ‘group pressures’ and is not always just the thinking of the individual. Ultimately the appearance of a person ‘becomes a central element of the reflexive project of the self’.

### 3.7. Habitus

Mahmood (2001, p.215), a social cultural anthropologist, examines the idea of habitus meaning ‘habituated learning through practical knowledge’ and in her research with the ‘women’s mosque movement’ in Egypt she explores the idea of habitus in relation to the wearing of the hijab. Referring to Pierre Bourdieu’s 1977 definition, Mahmood explains how her work draws on the Aristotelian meaning of the term which refers to habitus as:

> …a specific pedagogical process by which moral virtues are acquired through a coordination of outward behaviour (e.g. bodily acts, social demeanour [sic]) with inward dispositions (e.g. emotional states, thoughts, intentions).

(Mahmood, 2001, p.215)

This definition differs from Bourdieu’s, as according to Mahmood (2001, p.215), it does not apply to all types of knowledge and it does not ‘necessarily serve as a conceptual bridge between the objective world of social structures and subjective consciousness’. Mahmood (2001, p.215) discusses the use of the term habitus which she explains was also used by ‘late medieval thinkers such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun’.

In an extract from her research with the ‘women’s mosque movement’, Mahmood (2001, p.212) cites ‘cultivating shyness’ as an example of habitus. She sets the scene by explaining how she ‘had come to know four lower-middle class working women’. These women were in their thirties and Mahmood refers to these four women as ‘virtuosos of piety’. These women would meet at the mosque, but they would also meet to explore ‘Islamic doctrine and Quranic exegesis’. She notes that these women were not from religious families and that some of them had battles with family members when they became more ‘religiously devout’. The concept of ‘cultivating shyness’ was important to these women who explained that if you acted a certain way
on the outside then you would learn to feel this on this inside as well. One of the
women related this to the wearing of the veil:

… In the beginning when you wear it, you’re embarrassed (maksufa), and
don’t want to wear it because people say that you look older and unattractive,
that you won’t get married, and will never find a husband. But you must wear
the veil, first because it is God’s command (hukm Allah), and then, with time,
your inside learns to feel shy without the veil, and if you were to take it off
your entire being feels uncomfortable (mish radi) about it.
(Mahmood, 2001, p.213)

Therefore, according to the definition of habitus used by Mahmood, these women are
wearing the hijab on the outside, and their emotional state and thoughts connected to
the wearing of the hijab are created on the inside. Mahmood (2001, p.214) explains
this as ‘an example of a mutually constitutive relationship between body learning and
body sense’. Mahmood (2001, p.214) goes on to explain that once this occurs the
hijab cannot just be removed as it is partly what defines the person. The hijab is not
just a symbol of Islam but becomes part of the feelings of the person wearing it and is
not just a ‘marker of women’s subordination or Islamic identity’. The women who
spoke to Mahmood (2001) as part of her research argued that:

… those who don the veil for its symbolic significance have a deeply flawed
understanding of the Islamic injunction: one veils not to express an identity
but as a necessary, if insufficient, condition for attaining the goal internal to
that practice – namely, the creation of a shy and modest self.
(Mahmood, 2001, p.215)

In Mahmood’s (2001) view the women’s mosque movement put a great deal of effort
into this practice to make sure that their outward image matched their inward feelings.
She concludes by saying:

This means that the question of reform of this tradition cannot start simply
from an advocacy of women’s emancipation from male control, but
necessitates a much deeper engagement with the architecture of the self that
undergirds a particular mode of living and attachment of which
shyness/veiling are a part.
(Mahmood, 2001, p.217)
3.8. Individualization

In an interview with Beck (2009, p.202), a sociologist, Beck explains the term individualization not as individualism or individuation. Individualization to Beck (2009, p.202) ‘is a concept which describes a structural, sociological transformation of social institutions and the relationship of the individual to society’. According to Beck (2009, p.202) ‘historical phases’ of this began as early as the Middle Ages and have ‘undermined traditional securities such as religious faith, and simultaneously it has created new forms of social commitment’. Beck (2009, p.203) goes on to explain that ‘individualization liberates people from traditional roles and constraints’. ‘Social classes have been detraditionalized’ and with this has meant that individuals ‘… become the agent of his or her own identity making …’. In particular roles of women have changed in that they are no longer housewives, and family structures now consist of a variety or relationships. However, Beck (2009, p.203) continues to explain that the freedom from traditional roles has meant that individuals are now more dependant on the ‘employment market’. These ‘individualized cultures’ believe that it is the individual who is in control of their own lives and has ‘a desire for a ‘life of one’s own’’.

In relation to individualization and women, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009, p.55), both sociologists, write about the position that women in Germany hold and believe that ‘rapid changes have taken place in the context of women’s lives’, which gave them the chance to participate in new roles. However, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009, p.55) explain how with this came ‘new uncertainties, conflicts and pressures’ and with this also came risks. Now women are not just thinking of themselves as part of the family, but have other aspirations outside of the family unit resulting in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009, p.57) asking why it is that these changes have come about.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2009, p.58) first analysis takes into account the education that women now receive, explaining that historically women were only given the most basic education whereas today, women are educated to the same degree as their male counterparts. These educational opportunities allow women the chance to ‘deal actively with their own situation’. These ‘educationally privileged
women’ have a ‘new awareness’. Women now have access to courses ‘… that challenge women to stand up for themselves and actively to confront their own situation’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2009, p.58, italics in original). Another consequence of improved educational opportunities for girls according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2009, p.59) is the fact that women today are in many cases better educated than their mothers and grandmothers. Women have left behind the traditional roles laid out for them and no longer see ‘marriage as a goal to be achieved as quickly as possible’.  

3.9. The individualization thesis debate

As seen in the previous section it is arguable that religion limits the extent to which individualization occurs and in relation to this debate Smart and Shipman (2004) consider the individualization thesis and its implications for choice. They state that:

Choice, as a concept, can be problematic because it can be read to mean ‘free’ or ‘individual’ choice rather than, in more sociological terms, contextual choice amongst socially constructed options, or relational choice taken in the setting of attentiveness to others. (Smart and Shipman, 2004, p.493)

Smart and Shipman (2004, p.495) through their research with transnational families set out to show that individualization is only part of the answer when looking at the lives of individuals and although their respondents held differing ‘degrees of commitment to a religious faith’ it was this religious faith that influenced the ‘values held’ by those interviewed. Their study was based predominantly around marriage choices and kinship ties where Smart and Shipman (2004, p.495) found that although individuals were given ‘“free choice”’ when it came to the choice of their marriage partners, some would ‘“automatically” choose a partner of the same ‘nationality, ethnicity or religion’. Smart and Shipman (2004, p.496) found that there were other factors that influenced peoples’ marriage choices than just those put forward by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and that although ‘some elements of the individualization thesis can be found’, this idea is not, according to their research what ‘defines contemporary relationships’.
Particularly in relation to arranged marriages, Smart and Shipman (2004, p.498) explain that ‘the individualization thesis’ would see these as an ‘assault on individual identity and certainly on ‘free’ choice’ and yet Smart and Shipman (2004) found that this was not how it was seen by the individuals concerned. They explain that:

People weave different elements together and what is particularly interesting is that different elements may become more or less significant to younger generations at different (historical) times or at different point in the life course. (Smart and Shipman, 2004, p.501)

An example that came out of their research were two Muslim sisters, one of whom ‘wore the veil and the other wore Western dress’ and from examples such as this Smart and Shipman (2004, p.501) came to the conclusion ‘… that ‘tradition’ itself is something under constant change and negotiation’. According to Smart and Shipman (2004, p.501) the assumption from the stance of individualization is that all women (and men) are ‘abandoning commitment to one’s kin, adopting serial monogamy, and embracing detraditionalization’ but Smart and Shipman (2004) found that this is not always the case and that their respondents were combining some of the ‘elements of individualization’ with aspects of their ‘traditional cultures’.

Smart and Shipman (2004, p.502) ‘… found young people who were fiercely traditional and older, first generation migrants who were relaxed about traditional expectations’. They explain how in their findings the younger generation add their own experiences to the ‘experiences and values of their parents’ to come up with their own set of ideals. Whereas in the individualization thesis, individuals are on their own, Smart and Shipman (2004, p.503) found that their respondents were much more committed to their families and tradition and at the same time their interviewees had ‘individuality and a strong sense of identity’. Smart and Shipman (2004, p.506) question that maybe the ‘Beck-Gernsheim’s thesis is simply too monochrome and too one-dimensional’. Smart and Shipman (2004, p.507) conclude that ‘even within one person, there are commitments to both traditions and change’.
These ideas on the notion of choice will be re-visited later in the thesis and analysed alongside the findings of this research to see if any insights are provided as to why the interviewees were making their decisions to wear or not wear the *hijab* in Britain today. The theories will be examined to see how far they explain why the women are making the choices they do or if there is something else influencing these women and their choices.

### 3.10. Summary

Many theories as to why people make choices have been proposed. Rational choice theory assumes that everybody makes rational choices and basing this theory on an economic model it assumes that people look for rewards and benefits when they make their choices. Although some champion the economic approach, others believe that this theory would still have the same relevance even if the economic terminology were removed. Others claim that although rational choice theory would be useful for explaining some choices made by individuals it does not help to predict what choices individuals will make in the future. According to others, it is ‘individual preferences’ and ultimately ‘social influences’ that determine a person’s choice when it comes to religion. The religious teachings that are passed on to us from our parents become the pattern that individuals follow once they reach adulthood and these teachings can be embraced, denied or developed depending on the relationships between the parent and child.

Lifestyle choices showed that we all have to choose how we are going to live our lives and that we all decide on our own self-identity. Certain factors of modernity have influences on our lives and dress shows a great deal about a person and their personality. The idea of habitus and behaving in an outward manner that reinforces an inward feeling has been explored. These women felt that once you became used to wearing the *hijab*, it becomes an important part of who you are and cannot just be removed.

‘A life of one’s own’ sums up the idea of individualization. Even though it is believed by Beck (2009) that this process began as far back as the Middle Ages, it is now that this theory is really apparent. Women are no longer just housewives, but are often
well educated, employed and do not follow the traditional roles that their mothers and grandmothers followed. Smart and Shipman (2004) suggest that the individualization thesis may be a little ‘one-dimensional’ and although it is having an effect on women’s lives, not all women have abandoned all kinship ties and tradition to become wholly modern.
Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Prior to 2001, as can be seen from the literature review (chapter two), many of the books explaining the wearing of the *hijab* were written from a male perspective, explaining to the Muslim women what they should be wearing. A number of empirical studies had been carried out by men and looked at the way that Muslim women were treated in Britain, focusing on the negative aspects associated with being a Muslim. However, there were exceptions to this: Haw (1996, pp.319-330) was working with Muslim school girls to capture their views on their education in Britain, and Bullock (2003, p.36) bemoans the fact that ‘Muslim women’s voices are still not heard’ stating that the intention of her research is to allow the voices of some ‘Muslim Canadian women who cover’ to be heard. Bullock (2003, p.37) continues that it is disappointing that ‘there are few academic studies of Muslim women who cover and live in the West’.

There appeared to be a gap in the knowledge as the reasons why a Muslim woman living in Britain would want to cover herself from head to toe have been a mystery to many in the wider community. Stereotypes have been rife and many have claimed that women were forced to wear it by their fathers and husbands who did not want their women to be seen by others.

The opportunity for this research began with 9/11 and became an extension of the work that I carried out for the dissertation of my Masters Degree. In the dissertation I examined the wearing of Islamic dress and the conflicts surrounding it in a secular society, focusing on the experiences of women at a University in London. This was a small scale localised study, whereas 9/11 opened up the door to a wider investigation into the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain and a chance to see if 9/11 had affected the way that Muslim women dressed. The intention was to speak to a variety of Muslim women from differing backgrounds and in different geographical locations to see if any patterns emerged in the choices about dress that the women were making.
Post 9/11, an approach was needed to investigate Muslim women’s attitudes to the *hijab*. Therefore, this investigation set out to interact with Muslim women who were living in Britain either on a temporary or a permanent basis to explore the reasons for the wearing of the *hijab* and the reasons why the *hijab* was not worn by many who classed themselves as Muslims. Through this contact the intention was to discern if there had been any changes in the dress of the women post 9/11.

The principal aim of the investigation into the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* was to capture the views of the Muslim women and to give them the chance to talk via another woman about their experiences. Stacey’s (1988, p.21) discussion of why people choose to carry out their own piece of research resonates with my work; she believes that interests already held by the researcher ‘…meld, often mysteriously, with collective feminist concerns to determine a particular topic of research, which, in turn, appears to guide the research methods…’.

### 4.2. Feminist research

There are deemed to be three-waves of feminism and as Contractor (2012, p.28) explains the first-wave of feminism started with the ‘British suffrage movement’ in the late 1800s/early 1900s. This first-wave was a political movement that ‘demanded political rights for women’ and according to Contractor (2012, p.28) ‘set up the foundations upon which feminist ideology was established’. The second-wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s built upon the successes of the first-wave feminists, but took rights for women a stage further in demanding liberation for women, although as Contractor (2012, p.28) notes this was often ‘perceived as an exclusively middle-class white movement’. This in turn explains Contractor (2012, p.28) led to the third-wave of feminism where ‘women of colour began to articulate their needs and demands’. Bullock (2003, p.37) in her explanation of feminist methodology also demonstrates how ‘In the early days of (second-wave Western) feminism (1970s), women’s experience was made the bedrock of knowledge’, but goes on to express like Contractor (2012) the opinion that this second-wave feminism excluded the voices of Muslim women and now this must be rectified by ‘listening to the voices of women who cover willingly, to find out their motivations, perceptions and experiences’.
Maynard (1994a, p.9) explores the concept of difference and highlights the criticism that the second-wave of feminism has faced for making ‘white’ assumptions about women. Maynard (1994a, p.9) explains how it is a variety of factors affect women’s lives and as such these all need to be taken into account when carrying out feminist analysis. According to Maynard (1994a, p.9) a solution to this has been by using the concept of difference and many text books now use this term. However, Maynard (1994a, p.9) claims that these books do not explain what they mean by the term difference or how is can be used to make changes. Maynard (1994a, p.14) sees that one way of examining difference is by starting with the experiences of those being researched and this has been seen as ‘one of feminism’s central tenets’. It is only then when these experiences are analysed, that women’s lives can be seen as they really are. However, according to Maynard (1994a, p.17) there are problems with looking at difference as it could lead to the possibility that non-whites are seen as being different to the norm. This in turn states Maynard (1994a, p.20) means that feminist research that includes difference must also examine ‘the power relations to which they give rise’. They need to examine the experiences of the women, but also the access and restrictions to resources to which the women are exposed must be included. To Maynard (1994a, p.21) ‘racism and sexism are interlocking systems of domination’ and therefore it is often the case that issues of race and gender need to be examined together.

Afshar and Maynard (1994, p.1) also note how ‘feminism and Women’s Studies have been forced to acknowledge the diversities of women’s experiences’ and explain that there is no one type of woman, as women come from a variety of backgrounds with different knowledge claims. In particular they look at the ‘interrelationship of ‘race’ and gender’ as they believe that for many their ‘race’ is a ‘defining feature in their lives’ and note how being ‘labelled ‘white’, in a world context, is also to be allotted a racial category’. However, Afshar and Maynard (1994, p.2) explain how women often have parts of their lives in common despite their race and this can be because of comparable class positions. They also comment how the ‘idea of ‘race’ is a social construction’, and can vary according to the context in which it is being used.
Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.106) look at some of the issues that can arise in feminist research and identifies political, social and economic divisions that can arise between women. They begin by explaining that the majority of women have some connections to men, whether it be through family connections or friendships and that women will often be separated by ‘class, ethnicity, ablebodiedness, nationality, religion’ from other women. In the view of Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.106) those being researched and the researcher may have ‘some social relationship to each other’ but even if there are connections the women may still view their lives differently. They believe that a major challenge for those doing feminist research is to establish ‘what they have in common with those they research, and how difference can be represented’. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.107) see the researcher as being in a very powerful position as they have control over the research findings and can choose what to include and exclude and ultimately come to their own conclusions. They argue that the term ‘“Otherness” came into western feminism as a way of seeing how “woman”/“feminine” has been socially constituted as what “man”/masculine (the norm, humanity) is not’.

When looking at literature associated with feminist research and researching Muslim women the concepts of ‘otherness’ and ‘Orientalism’ were mentioned by various authors. It was important to understand how research had been approached in the past and how research methodology developed. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.108) when explaining concepts of ‘otherness’ cites the experience of Fatima Mernissi, who challenged the position of Muslim women in the 1940s and the work of Edward Said who ‘exposes the power of the West to produce knowledge of the East (the Orient) as the subordinated “other” of the West’ and concludes that ‘subordinated women resist their constitution as the “others” of privileged women’. McCutcheon (1999, p.289), a religious studies scholar, explains how some have come to question ‘… whether anyone can ever attain neutrality when it comes to studying human behavior [sic]’. McCutcheon (1999, p.289) also critiques Said’s (1978) landmark work, Orientalism. He explains how Said as a literary critic looks at European works on what is termed ‘the Muslim other’. According to McCutcheon (1999, p.290) these works studied the ‘Muslim world’ and attributed to it the term ‘Orient’ and with these studies came many ‘stereotypes and assumptions’ which lead the ‘Orient’ or those who were ‘Oriental’ to be seen as inferior to those Europeans who were conducting the studies.
McCutcheon (1999, p.290) explains how this term has now changed and is no longer used to describe the ‘Muslim or Arab-speaking world’ and in fact what the European scholars were using the term ‘Orient’ to represent was ‘anyone not considered like “us”’. McCutcheon (1999, p.290) concludes by saying that: ‘… to orientalize is to define oneself by means of stereotyped portraits of the other’.

Reflexivity, according to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.118) is one of the best ways that power relations can be identified, and as such makes explicit ‘how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda/process has been constituted’. This is turn can enable the ‘knowledge claims’ to be examined and challenged and through this process ‘what knowledge claims are made, for whom, and within what frame of reference’ become transparent.

4.3. Epistemology

Feminist research has been increasingly important over the last thirty years in ‘challenging the silencing of women’s voices in society’ and claims that ‘feminist research aspires to be for women as much as it is about women’ (Burns 2005, p.66). However, to do this, the feminist researcher must understand certain feminist theories as feminist research is not just about the methods used but:

… raises philosophical issues of ontology (one’s world view and how this shapes what can be known about the world and indeed what it means to be a full human being) and epistemology (what counts as knowledge and ways of knowing).

(Burns 2005, p.66)

Webb (2000, p.35) agrees with Burns that ‘feminist approaches’ are more than the methods used and sees feminist approaches as ‘a way of being and doing research in which there has been a shared assumption about the need to place the diverse experiences of women at the centre’(Webb 2000, p. 35, italics in original). The work of Sandra Harding has been critical to the development of feminist epistemology. For Harding (1987a), feminist research is more than the methods used. According to Harding (1987a, p.2) methods are the way of gathering the data and therefore there are only three methods that can be used: listening to what is being said, watching different behaviour or looking at records that have been written down in the past.
Harding (1987a, p.2) believes that in the past when trying to define feminist research the three terms methods, methodology and epistemology have been muddled together when in fact they should be looked at separately. Harding (1987a, p.3) explains that ‘An epistemology is a theory of knowledge’ and as such would answer who can know and what can be known. Accordingly feminists have contended that the ‘voice of science is a masculine one; and that history is written from only the point of view of men’. Feminists have therefore argued that there are ‘alternative theories of knowledge that legitimate women as knowers’. Originally, according to Harding (1987a, p.4) ‘Feminist researchers first tried to “add women” to these analyses’. However, this in itself did not solve the problem as the research carried out still tended to be about the concerns of men, and as such feminist research only becomes distinctive when ‘it generates its problematics from the perspectives of women’s experiences’ and as a result it should be women who are explaining what these experiences are. Harding (1987a, p.7) explains further that ‘women come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no “woman” and no “woman’s experience.”’. She also adds how women’s experiences can sometimes be ‘contradictory’.

Harding (1987b) concludes that there were three dominant feminist epistemological positions that could be identified. The first of these according to Harding (1987b, p.182) is feminist empiricism which emerged as a solution to the problem of scientific research that ‘is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested’ and yet is often biased by the world view of the person ‘when scientific problems are being identified and defined’. Feminists realised that scientific enquiry was often sexist and only looked at the problems that men were interested in or topics were investigated from a male point of view. Harding (1987b, p.183) explains that as the numbers of ‘feminist researchers (male and female)’ increase there is going to be more awareness of ‘androcentric biases’.

Webb (2000, p.39) citing Eichler (1988) who recognised seven problems that could lead to sexist research and as a result of identifying these problems came up with ‘a set of guidelines for non-sexist research practice’ to help researchers come up with ‘new questions, new research agendas, and eventually new answers’. Instead of men and male interests being at the centre of scientific projects, it was hoped that research
would be carried out ‘from a woman’s perspective’. However, Webb (2000, p.39) takes issue with Eichler’s failure to ‘encourage discussion of the role that the researcher plays in the structuring’ as Webb sees this as a vital part of the analysis process.

Harding (1987b, p.184) believes that ‘traditional empiricism does not direct researchers to locate themselves in the same critical plane as their subject matters’ and as such it would be impossible to identify and get rid of the maleness within the research itself. As a solution to this feminist empiricists have tried to keep to ‘the existing research norms’, although as these were originally constructed by men and therefore cannot give a ‘reliable picture of women’s worlds’. This in turn leads to Harding’s second epistemological position, the feminist standpoint. According to Harding (1987b, p.184) ‘Knowledge is supposed to be based on experience’ and as such this is why ‘feminist claims’ are desirable because they come from a different kind of ‘social experience’ than men and as such ‘produce empirically preferable results of research’. In the view of Harding (1987b, p.185) it is not possible to claim to have a feminist standpoint, it has to be achieved and to do this ‘one must engage in the intellectual and political struggle necessary to see nature and social life from the point of view of that disdained activity which produces women’s social experiences’ and not from the viewpoint of men.

In her writings on standpoint theory Harstock (2004, p.35) believes that feminists could look to the ‘Marxian critique of class domination’ and examine ‘historical materialism’ to develop an ‘epistemological tool for understanding and opposing all forms of domination – a feminist standpoint’. According to Harstock (2004, p.36) ‘Feminist Marxists and materialist feminists’ believe that women’s lives are very different from men’s and as such Harstock (2004, p.36) looks to establish the ‘epistemological consequences’ of such a claim and seeks to show that the way in which Marx examined the world from the ‘standpoint of the proletariat’, can be used by feminists to ‘understand patriarchal institutions’. To Harstock (2004, p.36) to have a standpoint you have to be ‘engaged’ with the topic that you are researching and even then some of the ‘real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible’. Therefore, Harstock (2004, p.37) identifies five ‘epistemological and political claims’ that explain how the class of a person can be a
limiting factor; if life is looked at by two opposing groups the results will be ‘an inversion of the other’; those who are in charge ‘structure the material relations’; ‘the vision available to the oppressed group must be struggled for’ and finally once the researcher is ‘engaged’ a true result can be achieved. Harstock (2004, p.37) concludes that ‘the concept of a standpoint structures epistemology in a particular way’, and through a deeper analysis ‘explains the “surface” or appearance’.

Harding (1987b, p.186) describes the tensions that can be seen between feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint and calls them ‘transitional epistemologies’ that are useful for examining ‘modern culture’ that is still undergoing changes and sees feminism as ‘both a product and a cause of the changes underway’. According to Harding (1987b, p.187) ‘If women’s authority in matters of knowledge were already recognized [sic], that would be because we no longer needed a distinctively feminist social science’. Feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint are trying to ‘produce a feminist science’ that is more objective than the work that has been carried out before. This in turn leads up to the third epistemological position identified by Harding (1987b) feminist post-modernism. According to Burns (2005, p.68) feminist post-modernism deals with the issue of being different, for example being a ‘black feminist’ and therefore according to Harding (1987b, p.188) feminist post-modernism is sceptical about whether there can really be a ‘feminist science, sociology, anthropology, or epistemology, but only many stories that different women tell about the different knowledge they have’. Burns (2005, p.68) explains that feminist post-modernism questions whether it is ‘the right of white, middle-class women to speak for all women’. Burns (2005) uses the example of ‘the privileged position of white women in apartheid South Africa’ and explains how today, feminist research addresses not only issues of gender, but other differences that exist between women. Burns refers to this as a ‘feminist relativist epistemology’ as there are many different types of women. When examining these feminist epistemologies Webb (2000, p.44) also explains how this third epistemology identified by Harding (1987b) highlighted problems with the previous two, as it asked the question about ‘whether there can be a universal knowledge subject’. Webb (2000, p.45) refers to the work of Stanley and Wise who she claims did not agree with the three epistemologies identified at all, as they believed that ‘there is a spectrum of feminist epistemologies that shade into each other in people’s actual work’.
4.4. My feminist and epistemological stance

This research did not set out to be a piece of feminist research. However, as my research journey continued and I read more literature about my chosen field I realised that my work could be identified in part as feminist research. My stance is feminist because I was born as second-wave feminism was being established, into a family that valued equality and education for women and as such, I was encouraged to participate in anything that I wanted to do. I was at no point held back for being female or consciously prevented from following any career paths. However, my epistemological stance is more problematic, as I would identify myself as being situated between feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint, as proposed by Harding (1987b). My research started out, as empiricism, although as already noted but not identified at the beginning, this would have been feminist empiricism. As Harding (1987b, p.182) notes when being a feminist empiricist I tried to keep myself out of the research and tried to keep it ‘value-neutral, and objective’ in order to let the data gathered speak for itself without me being heard. However, as Harding (1987b, p.182) suggests for this to be true empiricism I would have had to be ‘dispassionate and disinterested’ and this is where my feminist empiricism departs and my feminist standpoint interjects. I was passionate about the topic that I was researching and was not only interested in the reasons for the wearing or not wearing the hijab, I was also interested in the many different women that I met and the different stories that they had to tell.

From a feminist standpoint, the questions asked of the women and the way that the interviews were carried out, were all from a female viewpoint, and as a result the analysis would have been carried out from a feminist angle. As noted by Burns (2005) and in the view of Stacey (1988) ‘Most view feminist research as primarily research on, by, and especially for women and draw sharp distinctions between the goals and methods of mainstream and feminist scholarship’ (Stacey, 1998, p.21, italics in original) and this research was all of these things. I was in part as Harding (1987b, p.185) suggests engaged in the ‘intellectual and political struggle’ in this piece of research, as initially I expected the results to show that the wearing of the hijab was a political stand as a result of 9/11, and as such did implicitly set out to identify and challenge the oppression of the group of women that I studied. I would not claim to be a ‘third-wave’ feminist as mentioned by Contractor (2012, p.28), or a
feminist postmodernist, however, my research does give a chance for some ‘women of colour’ to speak for themselves, although, this research is not an ethnographic study, so a proportion of the women interviewed were white Muslims who had converted to the religion and were therefore not ‘women of colour’ themselves. As Burns (2005, p.66) notes, this research does ‘challenge the silencing of women’s voices in society’ and allows the views of the women regarding the wearing of the hijab to be heard and as Webb (2000, p.35) notes the ‘diverse experiences of the women’ are at the centre of this research.

I was also aware that male Muslims at one point were responsible for interpreting the instructions in the Qur’an and as such would be looking to, as Harstock (2004, p.36) notes, ‘understand patriarchal institutions’. My field research excludes any input from males, except for an Imam who was a fellow research student and was consulted on occasion to clarify traditional Islamic jurisprudence and act as a gatekeeper. Men were not invited to witness the interviews, nor were they invited to be interviewed, as it was specifically the women that I wanted to talk to about their lives. However, at times it was men in the Muslim communities who acted as gatekeepers, although the interviews were mostly arranged by me and the participants. On one occasion I was a guest at a party in the one of the interviewees’ homes and therefore in the company of Muslim men. They appeared interested in my research and gave an opinion as to why women wear the hijab, but as this was information was not required, it has not been included.

For Harding (1987a, p.9) ‘The best feminist analysis… insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter’ and as such ‘the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours’ of the person doing the research must also be included in the bigger picture. Harding believes that ‘a little soul searching’ may help the research, although what is more important is to place the researcher, to see how their position may have ‘shaped the research project’ and as such the researcher can be seen ‘as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests’. In Harding’s (1987a, p.9) view it is only when we ‘avoid the “objectivist” stance’ that attempts to hide the researcher, that understandings ‘free (or, at least, more free) of distortion’ can be produced. Hopefully, my positioning can also be seen in my work and my feminist
standpoint is explicit in the way that the research was carried out, the work analysed and the conclusion reached.

4.5. Positionality as a female researcher

Feminist researcher Oakley (1981) and sociologist Finch (1984) both identify the special relationship that occurs when a woman interviews another woman. Both speak of a rapport that can be had between two women, which encourages the interviewee to open up and disclose facts that she may not otherwise have thought about disclosing. Oakley (1981, p.35) describes this rapport as ‘the acceptance by the interviewee of the interviewer’s research goals and the interviewee’s active search to help the interviewer in providing the relevant information’. Oakley (1981, p.33) in particular explains how much has been written in interview manuals about the need to establish this rapport. Finch (1984, p.72) refers to the work of Oakley (1981) and explains that ‘Initially I was startled by the readiness with which women talked to me’ and goes on to describe that when a woman interviews another woman the rapport is often instant and does not always need to be set up in a mechanical way. Throughout this research, rapport with the women was evident from the onset of the majority of the interviews and did not have to be worked at. Although there was sometimes an obvious feeling of nervousness from the interviewees, once they were settled and the interview started they appeared to relax and be more than willing to engage with me and appeared to give honest responses. One of the interviewees in particular made it clear from the beginning that it was really good to have someone to chat to about her feelings and experiences. The women appeared to gain pleasure from talking to me and gave the impression that they felt free to talk about their views and ideas. This is reiterated by Finch (1984, p.75) who believes that ‘The friendly female interviewer, walking into this situation with time to listen and guarantees of confidentiality, not surprisingly finds it easy to get women to talk’.

During some of the interviews, humour was used by both parties and jokes were made that possibly could not have been made between a man and a woman. This use of humour showed the rapport that had built between the respondent and me and proved that being a woman had helped to put the interviewee at ease. Nearing the end of one interview, after the end of the formal questions one of the ladies made a comment that
it was possible to talk more freely ‘when the men are out of the room’. This comment would only have been made between two women and interviewers such as Finch (1984, p.77) also experienced this identification that is only possible between two people of the same gender. Finch (1984, p.77) explains how ‘Comments like ‘fellas don’t see it that way, do they?’ and ‘you can’t ask your mother because it’s an admission or defeat’ indicate an identification between interviewer and interviewee which is gender specific’. However, Oakley (1981, p.35) explains how many of the textbooks warn against giving too much away to avoid bias and that ‘One piece of behaviour that properly socialised respondents do not engage in is asking questions back’. At some of the interviews the assumption made by many of the interviewees was that I was a practising Christian who was familiar with Christian texts and practices. One interviewee also mentioned changes that have occurred in Christian expectations about dress in church, which in turn strengthened the rapport between us. These assumptions were never challenged or confirmed by me to avoid changing the way that I was perceived and to disrupt the interview.

Some informalities and common features like ages were exchanged, as these would not have a bearing on the information being discussed and as the women being interviewed appeared to be so open and honest it would have been inappropriate to withhold such information that would harm the rapport that I was establishing with the interviewee. Oakley (1981, p.41) agrees with this stance and advises that finding out what you want to know ‘… is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship’.

Therefore it was believed from the onset that a woman interviewing other women would be an advantage for the gathering of this data. However, consideration had to be given as to whether this special relationship amongst women was across cultural and religious divides or whether a white non-Muslim woman interviewing women of varying ethnic origins, who represented minority groups in Britain and who all came from different religious backgrounds, would come up against a barrier when it came to the sharing of the information. In relation to this issue May (2001, p.128) puts forward the example of black respondents being interviewed by white researchers, and then using black researchers to interview black respondents, and show how the
answers changed depending on who was doing the interviewing. However, Ackroyd and Hughes (1992, p.115) believe that ‘… the effects of race, and by implication other characteristics too, are not always in the direction that might be expected: we cannot always assume that black respondents are more likely to tell the truth to black interviewers than they are to white’.

Haw (1996, p.19) explains how her research was not only ‘cross-cultural’, but explores how a ‘white, non-Muslim and not formally religious person’, spent time researching Muslim girls in Britain. According to Haw (1996, p.19) ‘The issue of whether the white researcher should stay at home’, was something that ‘preoccupied’ her during her research with Muslim girls, as she describes herself as ‘a white, not formally religious, middle-class woman’. Haw (1996, p321) goes on to reveal that she wanted her research ‘to open up spaces for the ‘voices’ of Muslim women’. She is very clear that the women that she interviewed were ‘not only capable of making themselves heard’ and could do it ‘with more authenticity and conviction’ than she could, but the research was about ‘making space’ for their voices to be heard. Haw (1996, p.322) states that her research ‘was never going to be, or pretend to be, a piece of black feminist research’. For Haw (1996, p.324) ‘A recognition that we all speak from a particular standpoint, out of a particular experience, a particular history, a particular culture’ does not mean that we can only research the things that we have a familiarity with and explains that the information that we are given during the research will ‘depend on how we are perceived’.

Dwyer (1999, p.6) when talking about her ‘own positioning’ in her research, explains how she and those who participated in her research ‘occupied multiple subjectivities’ and gives the example that at the time of her research she was seen as ‘a student and an ex-teacher; as non-Muslim; as religiously observant and racialised as ‘white’, and saw her positioning as ‘important in this research’. Dwyer (1999, p.6) continues that she wrote herself ‘explicitly into the research practice’ to avoid ‘gaining only a superficial understanding, as well as reinforcing dominant power relations within research’.
Although I am a white, non-Muslim from a middle-class background I too believe that it is possible for a person such as myself to carry out research with Muslim women. Even though I am a non-Muslim, I have studied the religion for over twenty years: first as a six form student studying A’ level Islam, then as an undergraduate where the study of Islam made up a significant proportion of my degree, through to my Master’s degree where my final dissertation was research with Muslim women. Therefore, although not a Muslim myself I have been taught various versions of the religion over many years. Also, while at University I used to help out at a multi-cultural centre in Derby where I worked alongside Muslim women who would give talks to primary school children from the local area. As a qualified Religious Studies teacher I am also considered to be knowledgeable enough to teach Islam to eleven to sixteen year olds, and have taught A’ level Islam to six form students in the past. Therefore, I have an understanding of the religion that is practised by many Muslims in Britain, have spent time with Muslim women and as such approached my research with an understanding of the practices of the religion, but with an eagerness to find out why some of the women wore the *hijab* in Britain when others did not, as information of this type and cultural nuances cannot always be found in text-books.

As Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) note an important part of any feminist research is ‘what they have in common with those they research, and how difference can be represented’. Even though I am a white, middle-class, non-Muslim there were similarities as well as differences between myself and the participants. As already noted, some of the participants were white British women, and therefore we had our heritage and race in common, although some of the white Muslims were from other European countries, but would have still identified in part with other white women. At the time of the interviews I was an administrator working at the University, and as such my middle-class status was not overt, as some of the women studying at the University knew where I worked and others had chosen administration as their career. I had a degree and was therefore an educated female, whereas so were a number of the women that I interviewed and could be considered middle-class themselves. One was the head mistress of a school in London and therefore had an understanding of my teacher status which gave us something in common. One of my participants was a doctoral student who I had met on a course and did not realise at the time that I would be interviewing her as part of my research until she turned up for the interview. Some
of the women were the same age as me and had grown up in Britain as I had. Some lived in the same part of the country as me and therefore could locate me as one of them.

However, there were differences between us all. A number of the women were older than me, and were married, the majority of which had children. Some of the women who were the same age or younger than me were also married with children and as far as marriageable age, as I was not married and therefore did not have children I was considered by some to be leaving it too late and thought that I should marry soon. I am a practising Christian, although did not disclose this to any of the women, even though some assumed that I was. However, I feel that this observance of a faith was in fact a commonality between us as Islam recognises the Prophets of Christianity and there are a number of ways that the religions converge. However, many of the women were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and therefore as Afshar and Maynard (1994) note their ‘race’ would have been a ‘defining feature in their lives’. As a white researcher I would not be able to experience their lives, but just as Haw (1996) wanted ‘to open up spaces for the ‘voices’ of Muslim women’ that she interviewed, I too wanted to allow the Muslim women that I interviewed speak for themselves. I also believe that it is the voices of the Muslim women that I interviewed and can be heard throughout my research.

Therefore, it was not apparent in any of these interviews that being a white, non-Muslim was an issue that prevented the women from talking about their religion and dress. In fact in many cases it was apparent that the women assumed that I knew nothing about the religion and as an ‘outsider’, the women made a point of explaining the religion fully, and on more than one occasion booklets on the topic of the hijab or about Islam were given as gifts. They were very eager to talk about the ‘good’ side of Islam, as they were very aware of how Islam was often portrayed in the Media. One of the women had printed off pages from a website to bring to the interview and another woman lent out her books on this topic, although admitted that she had not read them herself. However, as very few negative comments were made about Islam either from wearers or non-wearers, this could have been due to the fact that they only told me what they perceived portrayed Islam in a positive light. Equally, this could have been due to the sampling process set out to find Muslim women and assess their
habits in dress. It would be expected, therefore, that those women who were
dissatisfied with Islam may well not have identified themselves as Muslim or been part of the groupings that provided the majority of the initial contacts.

It is worth noting that this universal appreciation of Islam did not prevent some of the women from expressing distaste of either former or current dress habits of themselves or other individuals. Some of the non-wearers expressed how they hated wearing the headscarf when they were younger, but were complimentary about the religion itself and the benefits that they received from following it. As the women were being questioned about their beliefs and practices, they saw it as an opportunity to talk about their religion and spread the word of Islam. The general feeling, especially in Oldham where the women live in closed communities, was one of surprise that anyone was interested in why they wear the hijab. They were pleased that a non-Muslim was asking to talk to them about a topic that was very important to them. One woman who wore the hijab mentioned specifically that she was pleased that a Western woman wanted to know about the wearing of hijab and wanted to explain all about it in great detail and her reasons for wearing it.

Haw (1996, p.328) in her research with Muslim students also experienced that being white and non-Muslim had its advantages ‘For many I became a confidante, a non-threatening ‘outsider’ who was not an ‘authority’ figure in their educational or home life’. This notes Haw (1996, p.328) meant that the discussions were not restrained and as such the interviewees were ‘unable to predict the stories that they thought I wanted to hear’. Haw (1996, p.329) believes that the ‘white researcher’ should not stay at home, as the research process should be about ‘your limitations, reflecting critically, making your limitations explicit’ and is about how you carry out the research that allows all of the ‘voices’ to be heard. As I was a non-Muslim, the idea that another Muslim was judging the women was also removed. There appears to occur within Islam a view that you are not meant to judge other women, although there clearly exists a dress hierarchy. The more covered a woman is the more religious she is perceived to be and there is a definite idea amongst pious women as to how a woman should be dressed. These women could explain their reasons for wearing or not wearing hijab, knowing that they were not going to be judged by a fellow Muslim against this perceived grading of piety.
It could well be the case that being a non-Muslim was much more of an advantage than I initially anticipated. The women had the opportunity to openly talk about their beliefs, whereas they might not have expressed these in the same way to another Muslim woman. There was definitely an indication that the women did not talk about hijab to each other. The only disadvantage that could have occurred from being a non-Muslim was the fact that the women could have answered according to the official version of Islamic law. They may only have told me what they believed a non-Muslim wanted to hear and were giving a carefully crafted representation of Islam. Stacey (1998, p.25) picks up this point in her writings when she explains that ‘… feminist researchers are apt to suffer the delusion of alliance more than the delusion of separateness and to suffer it more’. The image of Islam was important to the women and some of the women could have been playing a role in representing it. However, from the experience of carrying out the interviews this did not appear to be the case as the women gave consistent answers to the questions.

4.6. Methodology

This set out to be research using grounded theory, but it very soon became apparent that this had to be combined with feminist theory. Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later re-developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The idea behind this type of research is to see where the data leads, to see if any categories emerge, that would in turn lead to a theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.1, italics in original) believed ‘that the discovery of theory from data – which we call grounded theory – is a major task confronting sociology today’. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.1) explain that this is a ‘beginning venture’ and therefore they do not offer any ‘clear-cut procedures and definitions’, but what they do emphasise is that ‘grounded theory is a general method of comparative analysis’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p1, italics in original). They acknowledge that testing theories is an important task facing sociologists, and they also believe that ‘generating theory goes hand in hand with verifying it’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.2). What Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.4) hoped to avoid with the use of this theory was what they call the ‘tacked-on explanation taken from a logically deduced theory’. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.8) state that so many times they have read an article where the
empirical research has instead of generating a theory had an interpretation added on at the end. ‘Our principal aim is to stimulate other theorists to codify and publish their own methods for generating theory’ (1967, p.8, italics in original).

The re-developed theory published by Strauss and Corbin (1990), was unacceptable to Glaser and according to Goulding (1999, p.7) ‘provoked accusations of distortion and infidelity to the central objectives of parsimony and theoretical emergence (Glaser, 1992)’. This was so much so, that Glaser requested that Strauss retract his methodology as it was not considered by Glaser to be Grounded Theory. Goulding (1999, p.7) explains that ‘Glaser stresses the interpretive, contextual and emergent nature of theory development, while on the other, the late Strauss appeared to have become somewhat dogmatic regarding highly complex and systematic coding techniques’. Goulding (1999, p.8) advises that researchers using Grounded Theory should look to the original texts of Glaser and Strauss (1967) before embarking on their research.

Therefore, grounded theory was used to analyse the data, but it was also a starting point to give the women interviewed a chance to be heard. As Stanley and Wise (1990, p.21) explain there is no one ‘common experience’ of being a woman and therefore, ‘the social contexts’ of all women will be different. A methodology was needed that would give a great deal of flexibility in the analysis process and would ultimately let the data speak for itself. Stanley and Wise (1990, p.22) explain how grounded theory has ‘analytic validity’ although are critical of the lack of ‘experiential validity’ and state that ‘Researchers cannot have ‘empty heads’, in the way that inductivism proposes’ and as such propose that feminist research should not give ‘adherence to one of the existing dichotomised models’, but should produce knowledge that is explicitly feminist.

In her theorising about feminist research Maynard (1994b, p.23) explains how ‘women’s own understanding of their experiences is one of the hallmarks of feminism’, and how this in itself can give rise to problems as the ‘very act of speaking about experience is to culturally and discursively constitute it’. Maynard (1994b, p.23) states that for some feminists ‘anything other than simply let women ‘speak for themselves’ constitutes violation’ whereas Maynard (1994b, p.23) acknowledges that
researchers themselves are involved in the analysis process and interpret the data, and therefore, ‘No feminist study can be politically neutral, completely inductive or solely based in grounded theory’. For Maynard (1994b, p.24) experience alone is not enough when carrying out feminist research, but the whole process should be ‘an interpretive and synthesizing process which connects experience to understanding’.

Thus, grounded theory gave the method of analysis that was needed for this research and the feminist theory ensured the inclusion of the experiences of the women themselves as noted by Stanley and Wise (1990). The theories fitted together to give a fuller understanding of Muslim women in Britain, although grounded theory did allow for the data to lead the analysis and ultimately formed the conclusion.

4.7. Methods

The research was based around the wearing of the *hijab*. The questions were structured in a way to allow the women to talk in depth about the topic, with the knowledge that their narratives would reveal significant themes relevant to the research. Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method because ‘Interviews will provide answers to the ‘why’ questions rather than just the ‘how many’ or the ‘how often’ ... Interviews aim to be a conversation which explores an issue with a participant, rather than to test knowledge or simply categorize’ (Stroh, 2000, p.198).

When exploring why interviewing appeals to feminist researchers Reinharz (1992, p.19) explains the importance of interviewing women as ‘an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women’. According to Reinharz (1992, p.23) interviewing women by women often ensures that what is being discussed is truly understood as women will ‘frequently discuss topics that are not part of typical public or academic discourse’ and do not try to fit the answers of the women into ‘categories that reflect men’s activities’.

There was a need to ensure that the women spoke honestly about their reasoning and to this end fostering an atmosphere of trust was imperative as the interviews needed to elicit these truthful responses. However, an issue that had to be kept in mind was the fact that the women interviewed saw themselves as representing Islam. They could be using the interview to reveal what they thought people should know about Islam,
rather than what they felt, and may not have wanted to talk about the parts of the religion that they disagreed with. According to Fielding and Thomas (2001, p.127) ‘A common problem here is where respondents give those answers which they anticipate the interviewer wants to hear’. To avoid this scenario and enable the women to feel confident answering questions they were often met in places where they felt relaxed and comfortable. The interviews were structured so they could speak one to one with the researcher and a guarantee of confidentiality was made by the researcher; they needed to know that in return for their honesty, their views and opinions could not be identified by those who knew them and would not be traced back to them. The atmosphere of trust between interviewees and me was fostered further through the careful selection of the practical methods used to carry out the research. At every step of the research this trust was at the forefront of any decisions made.

4.7.1. Sampling

Therefore a relevant criteria for this research was that the interviewees were Muslim women living in Britain. At the outset of the study careful thought and consideration was given to the number of Muslim women to be interviewed, as the desire was to obtain opinions from wearers of different types of dress, and from a variety of age ranges. Age ranges were a significant factor for this research as it gave the opportunity to obtain opinions from women at different stages in their lives. The primary concern was to ensure diversity and therefore to achieve this, three age ranges were chosen that would be used to categorise the data.

Those below 25 represented the views of the younger generation who were growing up in Britain. The women in the 25 – 39 age group would represent the early middle age range of British Muslims and immigrants who may be looking at their own decisions regarding the wearing of the hijab, but may also be examining these decisions vicariously through the decisions their children or their friends were making, and thirdly a 40+ age range who represented women who were two generations distant from the people in the youngest group and would have a higher proportion of immigrants or very first generation post-war British Muslims who had already witnessed the on-going process of whether to wear the hijab or not. This would allow for the identification of any generation-specific differences in reasons as
well as allowing for the capture of generic or general reasons for a particular type of behaviour.

Forty women was considered to be a sufficient sample size to ensure that there was a balance, and a sample table of the interviews carried out was produced, so that at least ten women were represented in the three age categories: under 25; 25-39 and 40+.

Within the sample there was a number of women who wore the hijab and a number that did not, as without this mix it would not have been possible to discern if any changes were taking place.

At the beginning of the data collection process, if the women fitted the key criterion of being Muslim they were interviewed. They were later classified and fitted into the cells of the sample table according to the answers given (see Appendix 1). Once a number of interviews had been completed, the sample was checked to make sure that it was diverse and forty-two Muslim women were questioned in total, which ensured that enough data had been gathered to draw some meaningful results from their answers. This method of collection and coding is referred to by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.45) as ‘Theoretical sampling’ which is the process of ‘data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes [sic] his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges’.

The data collected showed that five behaviours of dress were present, and subsequently showed that the differing categories crossed the boundaries of age and ethnicity. After the interviews, the following classifications were designed: Long-term wearers, New wearers, Occasional wearers, Past wearers and Non-wearers. These descriptors will be used throughout this research to identify the women when examining their responses to the questioning.
Long-term wearers (A) | Women who have worn the *hijab* since puberty or childhood.
---|---
New wearers (B) | Women who have made a choice as an adult to put on the *hijab*. This includes women who have converted to Islam and those who were born into Muslim families and have changed their behaviour to wear the *hijab*.
Occasional wearers (C) | Women who have stopped wearing the *hijab* and were going through a transition period between wearing it under certain circumstances and not wearing it at other times.
Past wearers (D) | Women who used to wear the *hijab* or a flimsy head covering, but had chosen to remove it.
Non-wearers (E) | Women who have never worn the *hijab*.

The table below shows the spread of categories. Although some of the boxes contain ‘0’, this was accepted because otherwise the interviewing would have been excessive in numbers and the intention was to collect a diversity of views that were represented by those age groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25 – 39</th>
<th>40 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of women interviewed</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term wearers from childhood (A)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New wearers - as an adult chose to put on the <em>hijab</em>. (B)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional wearers of the <em>hijab</em>. (C)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past wearers - had chosen to remove the head covering. (D)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-wearers from childhood. (E)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were invited from: The University of Brighton; two Women’s Associations in Oldham in the North of England; a local Mosque in Tunbridge Wells in Sussex; a Muslim Women’s Group in Hove in Sussex; and individual women who lived in and around London and Leicester. These individual women were accessed through women who had already been interviewed. Interviewees from different areas of the country were sampled to give a wider range of responses, which were not by the nature of the sample weighted to a particular area or community. In some of these areas the women lived in closed Muslim communities, whereas in others women lived alongside those of differing religions and identities. By choosing different areas of the country I was able to reach women with a variety of experiences of being a Muslim woman living in Britain. For the interviewees within each of the age-bounded cells it was ensured that they did not all come from the same geographical location. This was done to reduce the effect of any local influences upon the data and allow for greater ease in spotting general trends within the responses. This approach was in line with other researchers and according to Stroh (2000, p.201) when carrying out his research his participants were ‘selected to represent diversity and variety within certain parameters. These parameters were generated from the literature and from the aims of the research’.

The initial phase of interviewing was with some of the women from the University who were identified on campus by academic staff, and selected for interview by me by the way that they dressed; this way of sampling had its limitations, as it only gave access to those who wore the hijab. In order to achieve a balance non-wearing friends of fellow students and colleagues were asked if they would be willing to help with the study, thus giving access to those who did not wear the hijab through what is known as snowball sampling. In snowball sampling, according to May (2001, p.132) friends suggest other friends to be interviewed and this carries on ‘until the researcher is satisfied that their data are sufficient for the purposes of the study, or time possible interviewees and/or resources run out!’

Once the interviewing process was under way, it was not necessary for me to ask for further contacts as they were usually volunteered, and by using these contacts balances and structures had to be established so that respondents were sought within the pre-determined categories of age and type of dress. This meant that there were
more than enough women to ensure that the research covered the ages and groups that were required as part of the sample. The women also made many promises of contacts, with good intentions, although these were not always forthcoming. Those that were obtained were only acted upon if they were needed for the samples stated.

A specific example of this effect occurred through one of the interviewees at one of the Mosques. She had a Muslim friend in London, who she insisted must be interviewed, as she was an English convert. She contacted the woman, and gave the good news that the woman in London had agreed to be interviewed and had given permission for her telephone number to be passed on. This Muslim convert not only became an interviewee, but also offered to help to find the interviewees that were still needed to complete the sample. According to May (2001, p.132) snowball sampling is ‘… very useful in gaining access to certain groups. However, researchers also have to be aware that they inherit the decisions of each individual as to whom is suitable for interviewing’. May (2001, p.132) also explains that with this type of data collection it may be that the data ‘… reflects particular perspectives and thereby omit the voices and opinions of others who are not part of a network of friends and acquaintances’.

As this was not the only pool of interviewees used for this research, this form of selection was acceptable for this project, and within this group there were women who were a variety of ages and wore differing dress styles. However, they did belong to the same network of friends and on first inspection it could be envisaged that their opinions were reasonably congruent, but once the interviews had taken place it could be seen that there were members of the group who were going through very individual challenges with regard to the **hijab**.

Advertising for women was considered at the beginning of the project, although was soon discounted as a method for reaching the numbers required for the sample. As this was a very intimate piece of research I wanted to be in control of the sample and although some of the women were friends of friends they were only interviewed if they fitted precisely with the requirements of the project. The number and variety of women were found without having to employ this method.
4.7.2. Access

Many of the women needed for the sample were found and accessed by the help of gatekeepers and as the research was overt and the intentions made clear at the onset, help to access the women appeared to be readily granted. Although there was no guarantee that the gatekeepers were all truly impartial, in some instances there was no other way of sourcing the women that were necessary for the research. As Homan (1991, p.82) explains ‘Gatekeepers are those who control access to data and to human subjects. Whether or not the granting of access implies consent to conduct research varies according to the gatekeeper and situation’. The gatekeepers came from a variety of sources including: the University community, Muslim organisations, a colleague at work, a friend of the family, a family member, an Imam and a new contact who acted as a gatekeeper as the research progressed. According to Homan (1991, p.82-84) there are four types of gatekeeper: those who ‘control spatial access’; those who ‘hold raw data’; those who give consent for individuals who are unable to make it for themselves; and ‘the associate who is engaged to introduce the research task and purpose either to those who exercise the right to give clearance or to the subjects themselves’.

This fourth type was most extensively employed in this research project as these gatekeepers had Muslim women as colleagues and associates. As intermediaries they were able to put the women at ease about what they were being asked to talk about and who it was that they were going to meet, particularly in the climate that was prevalent in Britain post 9/11. These methods of introduction were also consistent with fostering a trusting and open dialogue in the resultant interviews.

For this research introductions were usually made through third parties who could verify me and the research that was being carried out. One example of this was when a colleague at work, who belonged to a local organisation linked to one of the local Mosques, arranged for an introduction to the Muslim Women’s group who worshipped there. The visit to the Mosque turned out to be very successful and gave access to a group of twenty women. I gave a brief talk to explain why they were attending and presented an outline of the research project. This enabled open
communication between me and the potential interviewees as well as ensuring that the subject of the research was understood by the potential interviewees.

The colleague in this instance was an example of a type one gatekeeper as only access to the women had been negotiated. A flyer detailing the research again to ensure openness was produced to hand to potential interviewees. This included the contact details of the interviewer, for the women to telephone if they wished to take part. This meant that women who may be unsure about taking part in the research could have a chance to think about it before making up their minds and would not feel forced into taking part without due consideration. Although not all of the women were interested in being interviewed, those who were willing to talk about the hijab once away from the mosque turned out to wear a variety of clothing and not the attire that they had worn for prayers, thus once again filling important roles within the sample table.

A family member approached some of her Muslim colleagues at work who agreed to talk about the hijab. A visit to London was made and these women were interviewed at their place of work during their lunch break. A Community Leader helped to access the two Women’s Associations in Oldham. He worked with the two women who were in charge of the Associations and in his role as gatekeeper, he presented the background to the research at the meetings he had with them. These women represented the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities and subsequently gave permission for the interviews to be carried out. As an Imam of one of the local mosques was a colleague, he not only contacted three women who agreed to be interviewed, but also arranged the time, date and venue for the interviews. On the day of the interviews there was an initial meeting with him at the mosque, before being taken to the house of one of the women to be introduced personally.

The role played by all of these gatekeepers in ensuring that the women had agreed to take part in the interviews in advance and understood what was expected of them was invaluable. Willingness to be interviewed meant that I had to spend little to no time explaining the research to prospective subjects only to have them decline to take part, and as a result this allowed the time spent interviewing to be maximised. As gatekeepers had been involved in setting up the interviews there was a danger that this method of access would influence the response or behaviour of the women once
the interviews were underway. For example when the Imam introduced me to the women they were very formal in their speech and behaviour. To eliminate this danger, once the Imam had left it was emphasised to the women that the research was independent of the Imam and as such all responses were confidential and would not be heard by anyone else other than the interviewer. On reflection, as the women relaxed, removed their scarves and conversation flowed freely it seemed clear to me that these assurances were taken at face value and believed. Similarly, assurances were made to those candidates sourced via friends and that their friends would in no way get to see or hear any of their responses.

I contacted the women, who had already been contacted by the gatekeepers, either by individual access letters, emails or telephone calls. An information sheet was given to the women containing: the name of the interviewer and the proposed thesis; a brief description of the research being undertaken; the time that the interview should take and the fact that the interview would be taped; the necessity for a consent form to be signed and a reassurance of confidentiality and anonymity was given to the participants at the time of the interviews.

Therefore, access to the women was achieved with a minimum of difficulty. The fact that I was a woman was not consciously used to gain access to the interviewees, although the fact that it was a woman who was requesting to interview the women might well have been a contributing factor to this access as well as the way that the gatekeepers were able to obtain permission and a willingness by the women to be interviewed. It has often been the case with other research that access to Muslim women, particularly by male researchers, is problematic. As Keats (2000, p.134) explains ‘In traditional Muslim communities …it would be difficult for a woman to be interviewed without her husband being present, and quite impossible for a woman to be interviewed by a man’. During this research project this issue did not arise, as the Muslim women interviewed were a subset of the community who had already given permission to be interviewed. It became apparent through their answers that they were permitted to mix freely with other women, but were governed by restrictions when it came to meeting with men. It may also have been the case that there were women who were not permitted or did not wish to speak to a non-Muslim regarding the hijab, but these negative responses were possibly not witnessed due to
the selection process carried out by the gatekeepers. The venues used were only permitted because of the woman-to-woman relationship, as many of these occurred in the women’s homes and for some of the stricter adherents to the religion this invitation would not have been extended to a male interviewer. The majority of the interviews were carried out in private places hidden away behind closed doors to avoid any interruptions and to avoid others hearing the answers given by the interviewees. These places included: classrooms at the University and Women’s Associations; offices at the University and women’s places of work; a closed off corridor; and rooms in women’s homes, including bedrooms.

4.7.3. Interviews

The interviews to gather data for this research were carried out from May 2004 – May 2005. The desire for a discussion about the wearing or not wearing of the hijab meant that qualitative interviewing was the preferred method of information gathering, as this would be the most appropriate way of obtaining the in-depth information required whilst allowing me some ability to gauge the quality of the response. The interviews had the opportunity to become conversations between two women who were relaxed enough to delve deeply into the issues surrounding the wearing of the hijab in Britain post 9/11. A variety of interview techniques were considered and as Ackroyd and Hughes (1992, p.109) explain, the reason for an interview is to obtain a set of ‘relevant replies to the questions asked’ and that the interviewer must be able to ‘probe further or encourage the respondent to elaborate or reformulate an answer should it be required’.

When deciding how to collect the data for this project other methods were considered. These included questionnaires, telephone interviews, email interviews, group meetings and visiting chat rooms on the internet. Questionnaires and email questioning were discounted on the basis that for this sample of women they would not necessarily delve deeply enough in to the motivations of the women for their actions which would require secondary contact to allow for elaboration on any points on which the interviewer required clarification. They are in the main anonymous and from past experience women like to be able to fill in the details without revealing their contact details, thus making it even more difficult to reach them again for any
clarification of points made. There is also the possibility that questionnaires would be taken away to be completed but never returned. For this qualitative research this way of collecting the data would not have been possible, although questionnaires could possibly have been used as a method of initial contact with the women via the gatekeepers. For this qualitative research follow up interviews would still have needed to be carried out to probe further the answers given thus doubling the work when time constraints were an issue. Doubts may also have been raised about the individuality of the answers given by the women if they were filling them in at a group meeting and would have a chance to share answers with each other. In an interview, by contrast according to Bell (1997, p.91) an interviewer can ‘probe responses and investigate motives and feelings’ that would not be possible with a questionnaire. Even ‘the tone of voice’ or ‘facial expression’ can contribute to the answers given in an interview and these additional responses would not be noted from a questionnaire.

There were also some concerns that email questioning may not have reached all elements that I wished to have sampled. Today more and more people have access to personal emails, although when this research began only a limited number of the women would have had access. Many of the women interviewed did not use email and therefore only a small number of interviews would have been able to be carried out in this way. As this research was to reach women of a variety of ages and from various backgrounds a method such as email questioning may have contaminated and introduced bias into the gathering of the data. Chat rooms were discounted, as the researcher would not be able to tell if they were really contacting a Muslim woman at the other end. This could also be regarded as an inaccurate and potentially dishonest way of gaining information. There would be little guarantee that those answering the questions were being honest in their answers and for the research to be ethical the researcher entering the chat room would need to be explicit about their intentions from the outset. Telephone questioning was also discounted. Unlike questionnaires I would be able to ask the questions and pursue elaboration as required, but I would not be able to see the facial expressions of the person being interviewed. There would also be no guarantee that the person being interviewed would be giving their full attention to the questions being asked. As will be shown later I considered this to be key to the interviewing process.
Group interviews were also discounted as the research relied on individual responses and by using a group interview there would be a risk that a consensus view arising out of the women’s responses would obscure the individual responses, which were what the research was keen on exploring.

Therefore, it was decided that face to face qualitative interviewing was the method that would fulfil the criteria needed to gather accurate information from the sample of women for this piece of research. All of the women irrespective of social groupings and age could be interviewed in the same way and asked the same set of questions, although not always in the same order. May (2001, p.121) describes four types of interviews that could be used: ‘They are the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview and the group interview’. The structured and unstructured interviews were discounted as a certain degree of structure was required in order to ask the women a similar set of questions which covered the area of research; however, flexibility within the questioning was also important to allow for other questions to be asked if necessary and to avoid yes/no answers. As Silverman (2001, p.13) states ‘Authenticity’ rather than reliability is often the issue in qualitative research’ and the most important aspect of research of this type is an ‘understanding of people’s experience’ where ‘open-ended questions’ are the best way to achieve this.

Semi-structured, or semi-standardised, interviewing was chosen as these interviews were to be carried out individually by me. Some of the women who were to be interviewed wore hijab and some did not. Because of this, this method of interviewing was ideal as one set of questions could be used, but could be adapted depending on the dress and the responses of the interviewee. This method also allowed for the in-depth questioning that was required as part of this research. The answers given by the interviewees could form part of a discussion, and as such could extract a more detailed response. During the interviews there were a couple of women who classed themselves as occasional wearers and again this method was ideal for allowing these women to expand upon their answers and allow me to place them more accurately in the spectrum between wearer and non-wearer. Fielding and Thomas (2001, p.124) when discussing types of interview explain that in the semi-standardised interview the ‘major questions’ can be asked in any order to account for the fact that more
information may be required and that ‘people often also provide answers to questions we were going to ask later’. When the arrangement to interview one of the occasional wearers was made with her at her place of work she was wearing her hijab, but subsequently when she was interviewed away from work she was not wearing it. It became apparent during the interview that her hijab was worn to fit in with the corporate dress code of her Muslim employer and she felt that she was under pressure to ‘conform’ and wear it at work. Therefore this method of semi-structured interviewing allowed for the final categorisation of all of the interviewees by me and took place at the end of the interview according to the answers given.

All of the interviews were taped with the permission of the interviewee, as the intention was to have a relaxed conversation, rather than hold a question and answer session, with the interviewer desperately trying to take notes. According to Stroh (2000, p.209) ‘it is almost impossible for the interviewer to record the content of the interview directly onto paper’. Stroh (2000, p.209) advises that these ‘interviews should be tape recorded wherever possible’. Recording the sessions also meant that the raw data could be kept alive. All pauses and intonation could be listened to during the analysis and the writing up of the thesis, maintaining a higher level of accuracy to simply dealing with transcribed answers to the questions. According to Fielding and Thomas (2001, p.135) ‘In most cases it is worth pushing hard to tape. Notes are not only very slow but open to doubts about validity’. However, some practical considerations had to be taken into account when recording the interviews. The machine always needed to be ready and functioning, which required batteries to be charged and blank cassette tapes to be available; background noise that could disrupt the recording had also to be considered. Two instances of background noise were experienced during the interviews. On both occasions children were present and being looked after in other rooms while their mothers were interviewed. The children making noise interrupted the interviews and their mothers had to leave off to quieten them down. This, however, did not seem to affect the answers as they were given at the same pace and the same amount of thought seemed to be spent on the answers immediately after the interruption as on those before. The interviews recommenced where they had left off, when the woman returned.
The places used to carry out the interviews were: classrooms at the University and Women’s Associations; offices at the University and women’s places of work; a closed off corridor; and rooms in women’s homes, including bedrooms. All of the venues were chosen due to the amount of privacy they provided, doors were closed while the interviews took place, and all disturbances were kept to a minimum.

For interviews that were held in a women’s home or the Women’s Associations, the requirement to have a private room was relatively easy to fulfil. However, the interviews at one of the Women’s Associations unfortunately had to be conducted in a shared office. The woman who had made the arrangements, and whose office it was, realised this was an issue and kept leaving the room, so that the interviews could be carried out privately. Only one of the interviews was carried out with her in the room, and from the answers given the interviewee did not appear to be prevented from expressing her opinion by her presence. On another occasion a minor interruption occurred when someone who did not realise that an interview was taking place, walked into the room that was being used. Again this did not appear to damage the quality of the interview that was taking place. As a result of this incident, and to ensure that this would not happen again, at all future venues a note was pinned on the door asking not to be disturbed. The interviews that were conducted at the work place of the individual were carried out in a room that had been procured for the event and once the door was closed it was a private space where the interview could not be overheard. With these sample considerations and the nature of the interview in mind a set of questions was devised to investigate the aspects of the lives of the women that affected their choice of dress (see Appendix 2) and to access the information that was necessary for this research.

The interviews started with questions designed to put the women at ease and to help form a rapport. According to Homan (1991, p.56) ‘An interviewer can by a friendly self-presentation put the respondent at ease and encourage a considerable measure of disclosure’. Therefore, the questions began by asking about their shopping habits with regards to their clothing. Consideration was given to the necessity of employing this technique and whether it was appropriate to start with the questions that put the women at ease. However, many of the textbooks such as Homan (1991, p.58) advise the use of this strategy to enable the interviewer to access the information they
require. As the research is about the motivations of the subjects behind their personal behaviours and beliefs such disclosure is not always easy and it was felt that the quality of data would be better if all reasonable efforts to establish a rapport had been made. According to Homan (1991, p.58) ‘Interviewers may establish a rapport and credibility in the initial stages of encounters with subjects and thereby weaken their subjects’ defences of personal space’. The women showed an element of surprise at being asked these questions, but through observing their reactions it was possible to see that it gave them a chance to relax and to talk about what they knew, thus, providing evidence of the appropriateness of this choice of method. When the interviewees were asked to describe what they were wearing and where they had bought the outfit, sometimes the description not only consisted of the outer garments of the Muslim women, but the women explained what they were or were not wearing underneath. The reporting of data such as this has led to the question of whether the women are being betrayed by this type of in-depth research. At the time of the interview the women were more than happy to disclose this data and through anonymity their identities will remain hidden. One author, who considers whether in-depth research in which women reveal a lot about their lives is really ethical, even when power relations are taken into account, is Stacey (1988). Stacey (1988, p23) explains how her own individual research led her to a dilemma as to what information about the lives of her participants she should disclose and states ‘… it places research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer’. Some of the dialogue with her interviewees revealed facts that she felt would not tell the full picture if they were not included in the write-up, however, she was explicitly asked by one of the interviewees not to reveal what she had been told. Stacey (1988, p23) explains how ‘…fieldwork represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships, a system of relationships that the researcher is far freer than the researched to leave’. Stacey (1988, p.24) concludes that this method can expose participants more than ‘… “masculinist” research methods. The greater the intimacy, the apparent mutuality of the researcher/researched relationship, the greater is the danger’. This decision on the selection of these questions and their order promoted further relaxation designed to reinforce open dialogue. The questions on shopping habits were the first of six sections that made up the interview questions.
4.7.4. Data Analysis

To supplement the data gathered during the interviews a research a journal was kept to record things that I had noted either at preliminary meetings or at the interviews themselves. After the meetings or interviews, notes were written up which took into account other minor details that were not covered by the interview questions, but were kept in case they played an important part at a later stage in the data analysis. For example, at the end of one of the preliminary meetings I noted in my journal that: 1) she had her head covered, but was wearing western style clothing. A long coat over a long skirt; 2) she is married; 3) she has children; and 4) her country is sponsoring her studies. After one of the interviews I noted that: “….was waiting for an important phone call from her doctor about her little girl.” These details may not have seemed important at the time, but in retrospect, gave a more detailed picture of the life of the Muslim woman that I was interviewing. The questions were coded in relation to the sets that they belonged to and once the interviews had been completed a spread sheet was designed to analyse the data.

The first phase of this was to create a document that would be used to compare the answers from all of the women. The questions were set out along the left hand side and the answers from each woman ran parallel to the questions. This gave me the chance to scroll along the rows to compare and contrast the answers from the women. Alongside this database of answers a spreadsheet of other information was filled in. The headings for this table included: the categories of dress that the women fitted into; their ages; their residency status; whether they considered themselves to be British/non-British; their marital status; whether they were students/non-students; ethnicity (provided by the women); and whether they were a Muslims by birth/convert. Much of this information was gathered from the interviews, although some was collated through the use of the journal (Appendix 1).

The second phase of analysis looked at the answers to the questions and condensed them into key phrases to see if any themes occurred from the data. Five major themes were identified which included: Religion/religious community; Education; Family and friends; Clothing industry/fashion; and 9/11. The spreadsheet could then be colour coded so that the themes could be easily identified. The data was then re-examined for
the third phase to look at the opinions of the women and at this point in the analysis four groups of women were identified: those who wore the hijab and had strong views as to why they wore it; those who wore the hijab and did not have strong views as to why; those who did not wear the hijab and had strong views about why they did not wear it; and those who did not wear the hijab and had not really thought about why. These women did not necessarily fit with the five categories of dress that had already been identified, but this final stage of analysis did reveal that the notion of choice was the key theme that ran through the research. According to their explanation of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.105) refer to this type of data analysis as ‘The Constant Comparative Method’ that consists of four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory.

4.7.5. Ethical considerations

As I transferred my studies from The University of Brighton to The University of Derby it was The University of Brighton’s Research Ethics Committee that checked and approved this thesis proposal. Three ethical considerations had to be taken into account during the research: informed consent, confidentiality of data and anonymity of the women. Informed consent was negotiated at the beginning of each interview, confidentiality of the data was assured and anonymity of the interviewees was guaranteed. Informed consent was important to make sure that the women knew what they were being asked to do and what it was that they were going to be asked about. As many of the women had already been contacted via gatekeepers they knew in advance the purpose of the research and had at this point had the chance to refuse to take part. I also ensured that the women realised that they had the chance to withdraw at this first meeting. This consent is an important part of the process, as according to Kent (2000, p.81) ‘… people who agree to take part in a research programme know what they are agreeing to and authorize you to collect information from them without any form of coercion or manipulation’. At the outset of each interview the women were asked to sign a Participant Consent Form. This form stated the title of the research that was being carried out and five points that the women were made aware of. Firstly, they were asked to agree to take part in the interview investigating the wearing of the hijab in Britain; secondly, they agreed that they had read the
information sheet; thirdly, they were aware that they could decline to answer any of the questions; fourthly, they were assured of the confidentiality of the data and finally, they knew that they could withdraw from the investigation at any time.

Given the need for the completion of the consent form it was possible that this could easily have put some women off from being interviewed. The interviews could not go ahead without the signature and therefore it had to be broached at this point in the proceedings. However, at the same time that I was trying to put the women at ease, they were also being asked to sign what appeared to be a very official piece of paper and what was seen initially as a casual chat between two women about dress, was being turned into a formal contract and a commitment being made between the interviewer and interviewee. To enable the open and honest atmosphere that was being cultivated at this point during all of the interviews, it was carefully explained to the women why there was a need for the consent form. Their consent to being interviewed was proof that interview had taken place and that the responses would not be used for any other purpose. It also reassured the women that they were not being tricked into taking part in something that had no real purpose. According to Homan (1991, p.73) the consent form also ‘… behoves professionals in the social sciences to be open and honest’. Once the women understood that the consent form was necessary for the interview to take place and for their protection, they were all happy to sign the form and take part.

Confidentiality of the answers given was an assurance promised to all of the women being interviewed. They were assured that access to the raw data from the interviews would be kept locked away and would be limited to the interviewer, although the Supervisors would have access to the anonymous data. As advised by Homan (1991, p.140) ‘The social reality of research is that one cannot compel subjects to speak openly and honestly’ and therefore as the women had agreed to be interviewed and give up their time it was important that they felt comfortable enough to answer the questions in as much detail as possible. As mentioned previously it was also particularly important to assure the women that the gatekeepers would not have access to the information or that the answers given by the women would be discussed with
them, thus hopefully ensuring that the women were able to talk freely about their views on the *hijab*.

Anonymity was guaranteed to the interviewees. As the research was to be written up as a doctoral thesis and there was a possibility of the results being published, the women were promised that their identities would be made anonymous by the use of a pseudonym. Therefore the identities of the women interviewed for this research have been kept secret. The five groups identified were distinguished by the use of the letters A-E and the women belonging to those groups were then allocated letters, so that they could be identified by me alone. The places where they were interviewed or worked have not been attached to any of the individual data.

### 4.7.6. The dress of the interviewer

Consideration was given to the clothing worn to carry out the interviews and as a white, non-Muslim from a middle-class background whether it was ethical to wear certain clothing to gain the acceptance of the women. While it would have been easy to source a headscarf to wear, it was important to me not to imitate the dress of some of the women, as I felt that it would have been completely dishonest and unethical for me to wear the *hijab* to these interviews. It would have potentially harmed the formation of a rapport, as I may not have been at ease wearing clothing that I was not accustomed to wearing and the wearing of an outfit to which one has no affinity could have provided tension between the parties involved, including the non-wearing interviewees who may have felt uneasy being interviewed by someone wearing the *hijab*. It could also have lessened the willingness of the interviewee to assume gaps in my knowledge and to fill those imagined gaps, which were noted earlier as useful parts of the interview. The intention was to make the first impression a good one and the clothing worn by me was not to be an issue, especially as it was the dress of the women that was to be talked about. However, some interviewers of a similar ethnic or faith background have employed this technique when conducting interviews. They have used what they have called the chameleon strategy and have worn their traditional Islamic dress to show that they are a member of the same faith group and therefore, legitimise what they are doing by the clothing they are wearing. Shah (2004, p.4) describes herself as an ‘insider’ because she had the same ‘cultural
tradition’ as the women she was interviewing. ‘This meant, where appropriate, I wore a *shalwar kameez* when interviewing’ (2004, p.4, italics in original). Even for an ‘insider’ the putting on of the *shalwar kameez* has ethical implications, by wearing their traditional dress they are, potentially, being dishonest in their intentions to put the interviewees at ease and are gaining access under false pretences. For an ‘outsider’ to put on a *hijab* for this study may well have made the women suspicious of my intentions and their responses to the questions may have been very different. Imitating their dress to gain their trust would in this instance have been unethical and would not have worked. Without a doubt I would have been asked if I was a Muslim and it would have also run counter to the intention to remove any worries about possible judgement from a Muslim audience.

The visits to the mosques added another dimension to ethical decisions of the dress of the interviewer, as all women are expected to cover their heads as they enter the place of worship. This meant that even though a non-Muslim was visiting, the rules of the mosque had to be adhered to and a headscarf had to be worn. On these occasions it was important not to be seen as a Muslim, so to begin with the scarf was worn around the neck, until one of the women requested that the headscarf should be put on so as to cover the head. At this point to a certain extent, I was wearing the dress of a Muslim woman, but only to show respect in their place of worship and there is a difference between responding to institutional requirements, as in a mosque, and unnecessary posing in what should be a meeting of equals. Although I had no objection to being asked to cover, there was a fear that in this instance I could be seen as imitating Muslim women’s dress. As a stranger joining the gathering, some of the women were curious as to whom I was, but once the purpose for being there had been explained they understood the reasoning and relaxed. They were under no illusions about the nature of the interviewer and treated me in a similar manner to other interviewees.

As many of the interviews were carried out in the women’s homes thought was given as to what clothes would be acceptable to a Muslim audience and suitable to enter a Muslim home. As I was very much an ‘outsider’ to the community which was being researched thought was given to the kind of dress that was appropriate for this situation. May (2001, p.128) talks about ‘blending-in’ and explains that ‘… it may not
be appropriate for a grey-suited person who appears more familiar with the deviants of the financial world to interview Hell’s Angels about their beliefs and actions’. The solution to this was to go for a very neutral outfit to ‘blend-in’ to the surroundings and not stand out in any way. The clothing selected consisted of a loose fitting long sleeved black jumper, and loose fitting trousers. Dwyer (1999, p.21) when talking about the dress that she wore to interview Muslim school pupils explains that she also ‘deliberately dressed in long skirts or trousers’ and tried to ‘fashion an identity which might be seen as ‘neutral’’. To ensure consistency, I wore the same outfit to each of the interviews. A minor problem arose when the interview became the second meeting, and another appropriate top of a similar description had to be selected to again ensure continuity. As most of the interviews were carried out during the winter months, what was worn was appropriate for the time of the year, was smart without being too formal and covered enough to be respectful to a Muslim audience. It was also felt that what was worn would not have an impact on the person being interviewed.

4.7.7. Language

English was used to carry out these interviews and the intention of this research was not to exclude any women. Some may comment that by carrying out the interviews in English it is using the language of imperialism; however, as the interviews were carried out in Britain there was a legitimate reason for the use of this language. Practical problems also had to be taken into consideration such as the fact that as I was unable to converse in any other language and this was a qualitative study and as I wanted to be able to speak directly to the women being interviewed, this was the only language that could be used effectively. As stated by Janesick (1998, p.30) ‘Interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic’ and it was vital that I was able to communicate directly with the women and therefore introduce prompts to the conversations if required. The use of one language also provided a consistency across the interviews, although the use of an interpreter was considered, but rejected as this would open up the possibility of meanings being lost in translation. Also, by carrying out the research in this way it guaranteed that all of the women gave their own opinions and a third
person did not give the answers that they thought should be given. It also meant that another person was not included in the interview setting to help ensure privacy.

When a mother, whose first language was Urdu, and her daughter came to be interviewed, I persuaded one to take a seat outside of the interview room, while the other was being interviewed. This precaution was taken to ensure that they would impart their independent views and to ensure that the daughter was prevented from answering on behalf of her mother and equally to ensure that the daughter’s responses could be made independently of any fear of upsetting her mother. This was possible because the mother’s English was fluent and she expressed no fears or worries over her ability to express herself. Either by coincidence or the selection process was influenced by the gatekeepers, all of the interviewees spoke fluent English, although as above for some English was not their first language. However, if questions were not clear they could be re-phrased by me as part of the conversation and answers clarified if they did not make sense. Most of the women had some knowledge of Arabic and one of the women, as part of her interview, recited the passage in the Qur’an relating to dress. She then went through the passage and translated it into English to enable me to understand it. The responses/language used by the women in this research have not been tidied up and are the words that the women chose to speak for themselves.

4.8. Generalizability and validity

According to Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.233) there are two types of inquiry: scientific or rationalistic; and naturalistic, which they would recommend for research that looks at ‘social/behavioural inquiry’. Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.235) explain how naturalistic inquiry is ‘driven by theory grounded in the data; the naturalist does not search for data that fits his or her theory but develops a theory to explain the data’. Therefore, by carrying out my research using grounded theory I have chosen to use a form of naturalistic inquiry. However, naturalistic inquiry is not without its problems and Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.237) set out to compare scientific and naturalistic forms of inquiry to examine the issues of generalizability, and trustworthiness that may occur when researching people and their behaviour.
Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.238) describe how ‘Generalizations are impossible since phenomena are neither time- nor context-free’, that ‘differences are as inherently interesting as … similarities’ and they believe that this is true of both scientific and naturalistic inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.241) state that: ‘Things absolutely known to be true at some point in time turn out not to be true at some other time, or in some other cultural or social context’ and that time can be an ‘important factor’. Even though this may be the case Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.241) continue to explain how this does not mean that research of this type cannot ‘transfer … from one situation to another’. They believe that knowledge about ‘differences in time or contexts’ are important to naturalistic research ‘as it is as important to know the ways in which fit does not occur as to know the ways in which fit does occur’. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 110) re-affirm that generalizations are the goals of scientists and that for naturalistic inquirers there can be no generalizations due to the fact that ‘generalizations don’t apply to particulars’.

What I wanted to provide was a rich data to show how people interpret their own lives, so just as Guba and Lincoln (1982) show, this research could not be seen as generalizable, but the responses of the forty-two Muslim women do offer an insight into the lives of Muslim women in Britain. Bullock (2003, p.41) when carrying out her qualitative study also did not want to ‘generalize from their views to ‘all Muslims”, but wanted to understand completely the opinions of a ‘few Muslim women’ who wore the hijab. The fact that a study is not generalizable does not mean that it is not trustworthy.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 246, italics in original) the naturalistic inquirer like the scientific inquirer must fulfil certain criteria to show the ‘trustworthiness’ of the research carried out, and they have described these ‘traditional criteria’ as: Truth value (internal validity); Applicability (external validity); Consistency (reliability); and Neutrality (objectivity). For the purpose of naturalistic inquiry Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.246, italics in original) consider that the terms used should be: ‘credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability’. Credibility or internal validity can be shown by asking the respondents whether the researcher’s interpretations are accurate. Transferability or external validity can be confirmed by using a ‘randomized’ sample to collect the data which is ‘representative
of the population to which generalization is sought. The naturalist, discounting generalizability’ and ‘believes that some degree of transferability is possible under certain circumstances’. Dependability or reliability can be verified if the research is replicable, however, for the naturalistic inquirer this replicability may not be possible as ‘designs are emergent so that changes are built in with conscious intent, and second, emergent design prevents an exact replication’. Confirmability or objectivity according to Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.247) should be ‘removed from the inquirer and placed on data’.

Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.247, italics in original) suggest that there are six ways in which credibility or internal validity can be tested: ‘1) Prolonged engagement’ at the research site to eliminate ‘distortions introduced by the inquirer’s presence’; 2) ‘Persistent observation’ to make sure that only important ‘characteristics’ are recorded; ‘3) Peer debriefing’ to enable the researcher to ‘test their growing insights’ with others who are not involved with their research; ‘4) Triangulation’ a number of sources are used ‘to cross-check data’ and any interpretations made by the researcher; ‘5) Referential adequacy materials’ other unanalysed data could be used at a later date to ‘test interpretations’ made by the researcher; ‘6) Member checks’ where those participants in the study constantly check the interpretations made by the researcher. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.291, italics in original) also state that there are eight factors that can endanger the internal validity of a study: history; maturation; testing; instrumentation; statistical regression; differential selection; experimental mortality; and selection-maturation interaction.

To ensure the transferability or external validity of the research, Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.248) suggest two ways: ‘1) Theoretical/purposive sampling’ to obtain the widest set of data; and ‘2) Thick description’ setting the context of the research to the extent that ‘working hypotheses from that context might be transferable to a second and similar context’.

When looking at dependability or reliability, Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.248) propose that there are three ways that this can be achieved: ‘1) Use of overlap methods’ where a ‘triangulation process’ that would usually be used for ‘validity, also undergirds claims of reliability’; ‘2) Stepwise replication’ where ‘inquirers and data sources’ are
‘investigated independently’; and ‘3) The *dependability audit*’ a trail ‘which delineates all methodological steps and decision points and which provides access to all data in their several raw and process stages’.

Guba and Lincoln (1982, p.248) recommend that there are three ways to carry out *confirmability* or objectivity: ‘1) *Triangulation*’ a number of sources are used ‘to cross-check data’ and any interpretations made by the researcher; ‘2) *Practicing reflexivity*’ which is ‘attempting to uncover one’s underlying epistemological assumptions’ and keeping ‘a reflexive journal’; and ‘3) The *confirmability audit*’ where ‘each finding can be appropriately traced back through analysis steps to original data’ and that ‘interpretations of data clusters are reasonable’.

Due to time constraints, the geographical locations and the nature of the sampling it was not always possible to go back to the respondents for their internal validity. As the women lived in different areas of the country and, as the interviews were qualitative one hour slots at a variety of venues, it was not always possible for me to spend time with the women in their own environment. I knew the names of all of the women, although as I had met some of the women at friend’s houses I did not always have contact details for them. However, in retrospect, some of the women could have been asked to check the transcripts of the interviews for me if I had posted them to them. The transferability or external validity is easier to see in the research as the women were randomly sampled from a number of volunteers from a variety of geographical areas. However, from that random sample the women were selected, so that there was a spread across the age categories, and a number were interviewed according to the way they dressed. This ensured that I had the widest set of data that was possible for this piece of research, and if the context could be replicated the results of the research may be transferable.

The dependability or reliability of the research and whether it could be replicable is harder to establish. As a woman the range of questions that could safely be asked was wider and I felt that I was more likely to get an honest response to some of the questions where they were of a physically personal nature, for example, the disclosure of what was worn or not worn underneath the outer garments. Some very traditional Muslims may object to some of the information gathered by my research being
disclosed and some Muslim men and women may object to the issues relating to the undergarments of a Muslim woman being discussed. However, these discussions were carried out between two women in the effort to encourage an understanding of what it is like to live as a Muslim woman. They are not just covered members of a distant religion that should not be seen or heard, but have reasons for the way they dress and the decisions they make. As the women interviewed wanted to break down the old stereotypes of being oppressed by their men folk, and reassure me that the wearing of the hijab was indeed their own choice, without pressure from men, there were no objections shown to this sharing of knowledge. As a woman this level of intimacy could be shown. Under the mores of the Muslim community a Muslim woman would not be able to remove her hijab in front of a forbidden male and it would have been difficult for a man to ask a Muslim woman the same personal questions. Discussion of underwear would also possibly not have been disclosed. However, this disclosure enhances the research, as I was allowed a glimpse of the private world of Muslim women. The interviewees were happy to be alone with me, whereas most of them would not have been happy being alone with a man and would not have been so open and given these types of answers.

On one occasion during Ramadan when I was invited to attend iftar, a set of interviews were carried out sitting on the double bed of the hostess, as this was the only private room available in the house. According to the traditional Muslim conventions this would not have been allowed to occur if a male was interviewing. The entry into a private space such as a bedroom also raises the questions as to whether this research was intrusive of the interviewee’s privacy. I was welcomed as a guest, and as both interviewer and interviewees were women there was no concept of there being a problem with using this venue, the interviewees obviously felt comfortable enough with the situation and it did prove to be an excellent venue, as it was private and the interview went ahead undisturbed. This type of welcome was extended to me at the majority of the interviews with the women doing everything possible to ensure a warm welcome and a comfortable environment in which to carry out the research. Therefore there did not appear to be any obvious reluctance by the women to be interviewed, in fact there was shown a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement by many of the women.
When talking about relations between researcher and participant Finch (1984, p.79) observes that ‘One’s identity as a woman therefore provides the entrée into the interview situation’. This can also be seen in my research, as the women did appear to be incredibly honest in their answers and spoke of things that would have been taboo to talk of in front of a man, thus increasing the reliability of the research. Haw (1996, p.322) raises the issue of ‘whether or not a man can do a piece of feminist research’ and concludes that in her opinion a man cannot. However, in support of male researchers, she does believe that it is possible for some men to carry out research that is ‘sympathetic to feminist theory and which includes the ‘voice’ of women’. In research such as mine, another woman would be able to replicate this data, whereas a man would never be allowed to discuss these issues with true followers of the faith, and therefore there would be limits as to what a male researcher would be able to achieve.

The issue of confirmability or objectivity has been addressed by reflecting on my epistemological stance and my positionality as a feminist researcher. By understanding my position in my research it has been possible to ensure that the emphasis was on the data speaking for itself, giving voice to the women being interviewed.

Rigor and trustworthiness within the research has also been achieved through the use of triangulation. My findings have been validated through greater use of secondary literature and reference to other research with Muslim women. These other studies not only validate my own claims but also show the nuances and complexity involved when it comes to the decision whether to wear the hijab or not.

4.9. Summary

Feminist research has developed since the first wave of feminism which began in the late 1800s. It starts with the experiences of the women that are being researched and gives voice to these women. Feminist theories have been developed and three epistemological positions have been identified: feminist empiricism; feminist standpoint; and feminist post-modernism. My feminist stance is that of a second-wave feminist due to the timing of my birth and my epistemological stance is between
feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint. My positionality as a female researcher is that of a white, non-Muslim, from a middle-class background, however, due to the rapport between myself and the interviewees and the fact that I wanted to give a voice to these women my position was not an issue.

Grounded theory was combined with feminist theory as a flexible methodology was needed to allow the data to speak for itself and to allow the voices of the interviewees to be heard. Forty-two women were interviewed in the age categories: under 25; 25-39; and 40+, some of which wore the hijab and some that did not. These were identified as: Long-term wearers; New wearers; Occasional wearers; Past wearers; and Non-wearers. They came from various geographical locations with some of the women living in closed Muslim communities whereas others did not.

Access to the women was obtained with little difficulty and all of the women spoken to appeared to be content to answer the questions and on many occasions were seen to be enjoying the chance to meet with another woman and discuss issues that were very important to them. The choice of one to one interviews proved to be a very successful method of eliciting consistent and hopefully truthful answers from the women who appeared to be open and honest in the answers given. The data identified a number of themes: Religion/religious community; Education; Family and friends; Clothing industry/fashion; and 9/11.

Once the ethical considerations had been taken into account the women felt comfortable that they were not being asked anything unreasonable and there was a valid research project going. My choice of clothing reflected my position as a non-Muslim and as such created the chance for me to learn from women who knew about their own religion and the English language was used successfully to obtain the answers required. The research has given a snap shot of the lives of some Muslim women in Britain and has been validated by the use of secondary sources making it a reliable and trustworthy piece of research.
Chapter Five: Findings

5.1. Introduction

The data gathered was from one set of questions, which were divided into sections. The same questions were asked irrespective of the dress of the women, although some questions became irrelevant depending on the dress of the interviewee and were therefore left out. The first set of questions ‘Life story so far’ encouraged the women to give a snapshot of where they were in relation to their religion and the hijab at the time of the interview. Having established where they were, the next set of questions ‘Back to the beginning’ took the women on a journey to describe how they had arrived at where they were with regards to the hijab on that day, and gave them the chance to reflect on what they used to wear when they were younger. These questions were devised to gain some insight into how far the women had made their own choices, or whether there was any parental or other external influence.

The third set of questions ‘Daily routine’ came back to the present day and asked about their day-to-day lives as Muslim women and the role that the hijab played in their lives. The fourth section ‘Rules regarding the hijab’ delved deeper into the reasons why they wore certain clothing and which rules they believed to be worth following and why. This gave the women an opportunity to talk about their beliefs regarding the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab, including a chance to explain the instructions in the Qur’an.

The fifth set of questions ‘Responses to the hijab’ enabled the women to express how they felt when they wore or did not wear the hijab and how they were treated by other Muslims and non-Muslims. This meant that an insight was gleaned into the way that the women felt when out in public or just mixing with other members of the Muslim community. The sixth section ‘Changes to the use of the hijab’ focused on current political world events relating to Islam and the hijab. It gave the women a chance to express how they understood what was going on, but to also explain the impact, if any, that these events had on their lives as Muslims in Britain. This discussion then opened the opportunity to find out if any changes to the women’s dress had occurred and why.
The final set of questions ‘Background information’ was not always asked as often the women had volunteered this information during the interview. However, the women were asked to add anything else that they thought should be known about the hijab, giving them a real opportunity to express themselves and to correct any misconceptions that they believed may have arisen from seeing women wearing the hijab.

5.2. Life story so far

The women were first asked to confirm their religious affiliation, and all of the interviewees considered themselves to be Muslims. What became apparent during the interviews was the extent to which the women were practising or non-practising Muslims, and even though some were not practising, they still considered themselves to be Muslim as they had been born into the faith. The majority of the women interviewed were Sunni.

To set the scene and encourage them to talk about Islamic dress, the women were asked to describe what they were wearing at the time of the interview. The answers varied greatly depending on the setting, personality and religiosity of the interviewee. For example, if the interviewee wore the hijab, and the interview was being carried out in her home there was some probability that she would remove her hijab, whereas if the interview had been carried out in what was considered to be a public space, then the hijab would have remained.

Mrs EB (non-wearer, 25-39) described her dress as: A traditional sari, with no headscarf. If outside I would cover my head in Oldham. Mrs DA (past wearer, 25-39) explained that in Britain she wears: Trainers, trousers and a shirt without the scarf, no scarf, I have never worn a scarf. Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) was wearing: Hijab (white), long green skirt covering legs to ankle, long white shirt with long sleeves. Miss AK (long-term wearer, under 25) wore: Hijab, traditional Pakistani dress, shalwar kameez.
Lastly, in this section of questions, the women were asked where they buy their clothes from. The answers given by the women broadly fitted into four categories: Asian shops; the High Street; they were made; or they came from shops abroad when the women or their friends were on holiday or visiting family. Often combinations of these sources were used.

Those who wore the hijab either wore it with clothing they considered appropriate Western clothing, or some form of Islamic dress such as a jilbab. The women explained that this type of specific Muslim clothing was not always readily available on the high street, so they had to look for it elsewhere when the chance arose.

The clothes purchased from the high street were chosen with a certain look in mind. The wearers had the desire to look a certain way to show outwardly that they were strictly adhering to the Muslim dress code and as such would be acknowledged as appropriately dressed by other Muslims. However, the clothing worn underneath did not need to fit in with Islamic ideals.

Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) proclaimed: Inner garments from high street shops. She wore western clothes underneath her outer garment and was quite happy to lift those outer garments to show what she was wearing. Her outer garment had been selected carefully and she explained that: My outer Islamic garments are from designers. Mrs BM then went on to expand on this saying that: This is how I normally dress, but there would be different colours and different styles.

Those women who did not wear the hijab explained that they could buy their clothing from any shops and although many still chose to dress modestly, this could be achieved by visiting the high street shops. Contractor (2012, p.91) also found amongst her participants that you could still be modest without wearing the hijab, and her participants mentioned not only Muslims, but others from ‘other/no faith backgrounds’ who dressed modestly. Those interviewed for this research who did not wear the hijab did not have the desire to dress overtly as Muslims and their choice of clothing did not identify them as such. They were dressing according to their own rules or self-imposed rules that they felt were necessary in the society in which they
were living. Although these women were Muslims, they were able to wear the latest fashions as their outer garments.

5.3. Back to the beginning

The data gathered revealed two differing groups of women who wore the *hijab*. These could be classed as long-term wearers (those who had worn it since puberty or childhood), and new wearers (those who had put it on as an adult). If at the interview they were wearing the *hijab*, they were asked if they always wore it and if there was a time in their life when they did not wear it. This was designed to establish how old the women were when they started to wear the *hijab*. The women who had worn it from puberty or as a child had often grown up with their mothers wearing the scarf and saw it as a natural progression in their lives. All of the women explained that they had made the choice to put on the *hijab* in accordance with their Muslim beliefs and were happy to be wearing the *hijab* in Britain today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Under 25</th>
<th>25 – 39</th>
<th>40 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term wearers from childhood. (A)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New wearers - as an adult chose to put on the <em>hijab</em>. (B)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those women who had put on the *hijab* upon reaching adulthood could be further divided into two groups: converts (those who started to wear it when they converted to Islam); and those who had started to wear it as an adult after they had experienced an upsurge in their Islamic identity through a renewed interest in their religion.

From the interviewees for this research five of the women were converts to Islam. Three were English in origin, one was French and one was Italian. One woman was a convert from *Shi’a* Islam to *Sunni* Islam although as she was already born into the religion of Islam she was not categorised as a convert in the same way as the other women who had converted from an alternative religion or had no religious faith previous to their conversion. For the purpose of this research and to achieve
consistency, the word ‘convert’ has been chosen to describe those women who have changed from another religion or from atheism or agnosticism to Islam. Many of the women interviewed described these women as ‘reverts’ with the belief that all humans were born as Muslims and that when someone changes to Islam they are reverting to their original state.

Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) when asked about the terms revert and convert, explained:

> Well, regarding this term you will find two ‘schools of thought’ or opinions. I personally prefer the term ‘convert’ because indeed I did convert to Islam from whatever I believed before. Others you will find may prefer the term ‘revert’ as they believe that everyone is in fact born Muslim or in ‘submission to the One Creator’, and it is their parents who bring them up as Christian, Hindu or Atheist (whatever) and in fact they have reverted back to their true ‘fitra’ or natural state of being a Muslim.

Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) converted to Islam in 1982 when she was working in the Middle East and had worn the hijab since then. When her conversion occurred she took on the Islamic dress of those Muslims among whom she was living. She explains that: The only understanding I had of hijab when I converted was the people around me. I have now adapted my dress to what I feel comfortable in. Her family expected her conversion, and as she did not have any non-Muslim friends at that time, there was no resistance to her putting on the hijab: I put on the hijab to try before becoming a Muslim, but once I was a Muslim I found it much easier. Mrs BJ believed that Islam was stronger in London than in the Gulf and it was not until she moved back to England that she found true Islam. She also believed that 9/11 had had an influence on the increase in number of conversions to Islam. When asked if she thought that more women were putting on the hijab her response was: Yes, the ones I know are putting on the hijab.

Mrs BL (new wearer, 25-39) married a Muslim man fifteen years ago and then converted to Islam and started to wear the hijab thirteen years ago. She said it: felt strange to go from shorts and T-shirts to covering. When she put on the hijab she thought that people would look at her, but she realised that they didn’t bother, although her mother has asked her not to wear it when she visits.
Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) was brought up as a practising Catholic, although explained that there were some aspects of the Catholic faith that she was unsure about. In the summer of 2000 she converted to Islam after she got married: *I started to cover by wearing long skirts and sleeves when I converted, when I got to know Islam in the summer of 2000.* Through learning about the religion hers was a full conversion to Islam and she believed that her donning of the *hijab* was the right thing to do: *It took me a year to decide, but I love saying look I am a Muslim. It takes time and is a big step. I do wonder what other people think. If a woman is not convinced, then it is not right.*

Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) had also been brought up as a practising Catholic, spending her schooling in a convent, and had converted to Islam in 1982 when she married a Muslim: *I found it difficult at the beginning I was worried about reactions to my change, especially my family.*

Mrs CA (occasional wearer, 40+) was brought up as Church of England and although she had been married to a Muslim man for twenty-seven years, she had only been wearing the *hijab* for seventeen. As an occasional wearer her feelings and motivations with regards to the wearing of the *hijab* were different from the other converts: *Even though I take it off, I still consider myself to be a Muslim.*

The majority of the converts had put on the *hijab* as soon as they had converted to Islam. This occasionally coincided with the women marrying into Islam, although in most cases the women’s interest in the religion had begun previously. All five of these converts were either married to or had been married to Muslim men, although most of these conversions had happened before they met their husbands. So, although being married to a Muslim man was a significant factor, it was not always the marriage that had prompted the conversion. With the exception of Mrs CA, the women interviewed had found their own way to Islam and the wearing of the *hijab.*

However, the dress of these converts to Islam was a significant theme. The converts clearly dressed in a more Islamic way than the women born into the religion and immediately after their conversion saw the need to put on the *hijab.* Once conversion had occurred they took on the Islamic dress of the community within which they were
living and did not just continue to wear Western dress or Western dress with the addition of the *hijab*. They chose to wear a distinctive dress style that identified the women as Muslims.

Although Muslim men are permitted by their religion to marry women from other monotheistic faiths, these women clearly believed in the teachings of Islam and wanted to leave behind any previous belief systems that they had been part of to live a life committed to being a Muslim and their dress was adjusted accordingly. They were not content to embrace Islam and follow the faith wearing their original Western dress, but wanted to make an open show of their allegiance to their new found faith and make a statement to others watching that they were practising Muslims who knew what they should be doing as followers of that faith. It is a distinctive move into their new life as a Muslim and the rejection of the old life that they are leaving behind. Almost as a caterpillar turns into a butterfly these women were emerging re-born into their new spiritual lives wrapped in their new outfits.

Some of the Muslims interviewed for this research had also noted how converts to the religion were dressing more piously than Muslims who were born into the religion. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) asserted: *Reverts read up and know much more about what they are doing.* Mrs BF (new wearer, under 25) added: *I am seeing more and more converts that are doing better than us.*

This new way of dressing meant that the women could be identified as Muslims and as such were more conscious of their behaviour when out in public. They were very aware of being perceived in the correct way by Muslims and non-Muslims and appeared to carry out the other observances of the faith with as much enthusiasm. Bullock (2003, p.47) comments that a convert that she spoke to was also ‘concerned to be on her best behaviour all the time’. Although it was sometimes seen as difficult the women interviewed for my research often explained how they gained strength from God to follow his commands with the ultimate goal of reaching heaven when they died, knowing that they had lived as true Muslims on earth.
The women who did not wear the hijab on a daily basis fitted into three groups: non-wearers (those who had never worn the hijab), occasional wearers (those who wore it occasionally) and past wearers (those who had worn the hijab or a flimsy head covering and had chosen to remove it). If the women were not wearing the hijab at the interview, they were asked if there was a time in their life when they did wear it and if so, how old were they when they decided not to wear it.

All of these women saw themselves as Muslims and this was reflected in their answers. They all lived in differing circumstances, but the idea of not being seen as too religious was also voiced.

The occasional wearers were a small category and were identified by how they described their wearing of the hijab. The fact that an interviewee had recently stopped wearing it on a daily basis, but still wore it to present a certain image to her employers in London where there was a very distinctive Muslim ethos, put her clearly into this category. Miss CB (occasional wearer, under 25) asserted: I used to wear the hijab, but I don’t any more. I took it off a little while ago. Mrs CA (occasional wearer, 40+) who was initially a new wearer, but then, became a past wearer, offered: I don’t wear hijab anymore, although I still cover. This group was very small as the women interviewed tended to make the decision either to wear it or not wear it and then stick to their decision. There did not appear to be a middle ground, and once you had made the decision then it had to be worn whenever outside.

Those who had rejected the wearing of the hijab as an adult included women who had worn a dupatta when they were younger, but not the fixed head covering. The wearing of a dupatta was generally influenced by their cultural identity that had been
handed down through their mothers or recommended by their fathers. Those who had worn the *dupatta* when they were younger expressed the view that this was due to social pressures, and saw getting older and being able to make their own decisions, as a chance to take it off. Mrs DE (past wearer, 40+) stated: *I didn’t wear the hijab as a child, but wore the dupatta. I was more or less forced to cover my head. If I went anywhere I had to wear it, Mother would say: ‘Put your scarf on’, when I got married it was a relief to take it off.* Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) was in agreement: *My parents used to tell me to put my dupatta on my head. I was so against it, I used to just put it around my neck.* Contractor (2012, p.83) instead of finding responses from women who disliked wearing the *dupatta* found evidence from one woman in particular who used it as part of her interpretation of modest dress. However, instead of wearing the *dupatta* on her head this participant would wear the *dupatta* ‘across her shoulders’ which correlates with the actions of some of my participants when they were at school and felt influenced by social pressures.

Immigration to Britain was a motivating factor for some of the past wearers to remove the head covering. The other past wearers were born and brought up in Britain, but had decided that the wearing of the *hijab* was not right for them at the time that the interviews were carried out. Some of those who came to live in Britain saw removing the *hijab* as a way of not standing out or attracting attention. They quite clearly stated that according to the rules of Islam, women are not supposed to draw attention to themselves and therefore, when living in the West, a Muslim woman should remove her *hijab* in order to blend in with other women in the population. The women were clearly making their own religious interpretations, and a motivating factor in this removal was the self-examination of their beliefs.

Mrs DA (past wearer, 25-39) emphasised: *Wearing the headscarf here is bad for Islam. You actually get more attention here if you wear the scarf, especially wearing the black scarf on the beach.* Mrs EJ (non-wearer, 40+) had the view: *I usually wear this since coming to England twenty-eight years ago. I find it easier to wear Western clothes. I wear short sleeves in the summer.* Mrs DB (past wearer, 40+) felt: *If in this country the hijab will attract attention. As long as you are not dressing to attract men that is ok.* Mrs EI (non-wearer, 40+) explained: *I used to wear it when young in Pakistan. Mother showed me how to cover. When I moved to England I stopped*
wearing it. Bullock (2003, p.44) whose research was carried out in Canada, so will be culturally different, also backs this up with evidence from one of her participants who was concerned that if she wore the hijab and ‘wanted to work’ that she would ‘encounter too much staring and questioning on the subway’.

5.4. Daily Routine

When the rules regarding the wearing of the hijab were discussed, it was discovered that there were times of the week/day when the wearers could remove their hijab. The women explained that according to the instructions in the Qur’an, they could remove their scarves if they were in a place where there were no men present that they were eligible to marry. Mrs AE (long-term wearer, 25-39) claimed: At home with my husband, I don’t cover or if at a function where men and women are separated. Those women who were asked about the removal of the hijab stated that they could take off the hijab ‘at home’, but some of the women elaborated to explain that the restrictions were only lifted if non-marriageable males were present. The women who just answered ‘at home’ really meant ‘at home because there were no males there that would be considered for marriage’. Mrs EJ (new wearer, 40+) explained: When indoors, in the house I take the headscarf off, unless there are males visiting. Miss AF (long-term wearer, under 25) confirmed: When I am at home with parents, brother, etc. If male cousins are present I have to cover myself.

It was at this point that mahrem was mentioned to describe the men in front of whom they were allowed to uncover. The women made it clear that the hijab was only worn when they go out, or when a man visits their home. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) stated: In Islam you have mahrem, people that you can show your hair to. Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) also used this term in her interview saying: I follow the way of Islamic life. It says to cover in front of non-mahrem men.

The women explained that they can dress up at home and wear make up for their husband, but then cover up and take their make-up off when they go out of the house. Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) stated: You should look presentable and nice for your own husband, and take off your make-up when out. Mrs BD (new wearer 25-39) reiterated this: You should dress up in the house for your husband. You then dress down when you go out. Some explained that they are so used to wearing the hijab that they do not
even bother to take it off when they are at home. This meant that they were always ready in case someone visited whom they should not be seen in front of. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: *At home with my son and husband I always have it near to hand. Sometimes I put it on and take it off again.*

Being in the company of women was a recognised condition for most of the wearers to remove the hijab, and some of the wearers had removed their hijab when it came to the interviews, even though they had been wearing it when they were chosen to be interviewed. Some of the wearers explained that if they were with Muslim women then they could remove the hijab. However, this ruling for some meant Muslim women only, as they went on to explain that they were not really supposed to remove their hijab if there were non-Muslims present, and in this context a non-Muslim woman would equate to being a man and as such the rules regarding the wearing of the scarf would then be a requirement. According to the rulings a non-Muslim woman would be non-mahrem and as such the women would need to be covered. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) offered: *I can have my head uncovered in front of women even if a non-Muslim, although some women have a problem with that. They are worried that the non-believer may go and describe her to someone else.* Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) described: *The religion says I should wear my headscarf except in front of: Muslim women, my dad, and close relations that I can’t get married to.* Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) responded: *I put it on because you were visiting, but I do this with all women. I feel more secure with it on, even with Muslim women. It becomes a habit.*

An Imam, who had acted as a gatekeeper for me, was consulted with regards to this ruling and said:

*As far as your query is concerned, it is true that according to some Islamic schools of thought a non-Muslim woman is equal to a man in terms of Hijab obligation i.e. if in the company of a non-Muslim lady then they would have to cover as if they were in front of a male. There is another view that is relaxed and says with a woman, Muslim or non-Muslim, the hijab is not compulsory.*
Most of the women explained that the removal at the time of interview was due to the fact that they were being interviewed in their own homes. They were comfortable to remove their *hijab* and have their hair showing, even in front of a non-Muslim. Very few held the view that a non-Muslim woman counted as a man. Mrs AC (long-term wearer, 25-39) observed: *If I have female visitors I don’t have to cover.*

As it is the women who cover, Bullock (2003, p.58) questions equality in Islam and found that although her participants believed that there were differences between men and women, this did not mean that there was inequality. The theme of equality was not touched upon by my interviewees and at no point did the women express that it was not right or fair that they should be the ones covering. The women for my research all expressed the idea that the wearing of the *hijab* was their choice and something that they wanted to do. They did not appear to question whether they were treated equally with men. However, Mrs CA (occasional wearer, 40+) looked for reasons not to wear it. She believed that as part of Islamic teaching, the *hijab* could be removed for medical reasons, and the community would understand her removal: *I took the hijab off for medical reasons. I had breast cancer and then the Menopause came early. I had hot sweats, so it may go back on after the Menopause.* The decision to wear or not to wear the *hijab* was made by the women when the time was right and they had the correct feeling in their hearts. They explained that it is no longer just part of their culture and those who lived out the religious life felt that the *hijab* had to be worn. These questions also uncovered other practices such as covering their heads to go to the mosque, when they were praying or attending religious festivals.

### 5.5. Rules regarding the *hijab*

The different types of *hijab* can be seen amongst Muslim women in Britain are extensive, and the interviewees explained that the variety of styles had originated from Muslim countries around the world. Mrs BA (new wearer, aged 25-39) explained: *In the Gulf countries you wear a black robe and black scarf. In the Middle East you can wear a different colour.* The women explained how it was their cultural origin that influenced how they wore their covering, the colour and the style. The fashion of the country that they lived in, combined with their ethnic identity were the predominant factors in making the decision. Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) affirmed
this: *It depends where you come from. Hair should be covered.* Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) expanded: *Ways of wearing the scarf depends on the country you are in.* This changes with the age of the person, the younger you are, the smaller the scarf.

There was no mention of there being a unified dress code for all Muslim women and those interviewed appeared to adapt their dress to fit in with the situations in which they were living. Contractor (2012, p.84) in her work with Muslim women also explains how it is the ‘Cultural backgrounds’ that influence the type of Islamic dress that is worn by Muslim women and gives the examples of South Asian women who often wear a *shalwar kameez* and a *dupatta*, Arab women who ‘wear a loose outer garment’ and Malaysian women who wear a ‘brightly coloured’ type of *hijab.*

According to Contractor (2012, p.84) many Muslim women in Britain will wear Western clothing providing they are ‘loose, not transparent and cover the body.’

The women were specifically asked whether the *hijab* was worn for comfort or religious belief. These two options were the only ones presented to the women as they were designed to help to lead in to the discussion about the religious nature of the *hijab.* Originally when the questions were devised this question was meant to be about physical comfort, to draw out whether there were physical benefits in the wearing of the *hijab.* In the responses of the interviewees it became clear that emotional comfort with regards to individual security was also how it was interpreted by the majority of the individuals interviewed. The wearers expressed the feeling that it was comfortable to wear the *hijab*, not just in a practical sense, but also in the sense that they were no longer perturbed, by being looked at by people in the street. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) wears it: *Because I feel comfortable and people won't look at me.* Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) mentioned: *I just feel comfortable when I wear the scarf to go out. I don't get people staring at me, whereas I would if my hair was showing.* Mrs AE (long-term wearer, 25-39) declaimed: *It is really comfortable to hide from the dirty eyes of someone.* For these women the *hijab* made them feel comfortable when out in public as they felt secure in what they were wearing and the *hijab* became a form of protection from wider society. Bullock (2003, p.42) touches on the idea of comfort and gives an example of how one of her interviewees found the wearing of the *hijab* comfortable, as the woman thought that it was the right thing to do. Bullock (2003) does not expand on whether this was a physical or psychological comfort, although Bullock (2003, p.72) returns to the idea of how some of her participants felt
‘comfortable’ when they were wearing the hijab and that ‘it made them feel good about themselves’, because they were doing it to ‘please Allah’.

The concept of the hijab being comfortable was mentioned at various other places during the interviews. However, there was the opinion that because it was worn for religious reasons it was inappropriate to attach the physical concept of comfort to it. Those non-wearers who had considered the wearing of the hijab felt that they were more comfortable not wearing it and it was a part of the religion that they did not think would be very comfortable to wear. Some of these interviewees took the word ‘comfortable’ to mean the physical sense and unlike those who wore the hijab did not see it as a way of feeling secure when out in public. Their answers gave an insight into the fact that for some Muslim women wearing the hijab would have made them feel awkward and uncomfortable in the first place. However, one of the more senior women who did not wear the hijab had noticed the numbers of young women that now wear the hijab and felt that these women did indeed look comfortable in it. Therefore there is testimony that the hijab is comfortable in the physical sense but is also comfortable in the psychological sense and keeps you safe from the looks of others.

From the data gathered it was important to identify the reasons why some Muslim women in Britain are wearing the hijab and why other Muslim women do not see the wearing of the hijab as a requirement. As already mentioned in chapter one, for many Muslims, the Qur’an and in particular, surah (24:31-32) is used as the basis for the wearing of the hijab. The interviewee responses showed that all those who wore the hijab wore it as part of their religious belief and gave direct answers that it is in the Qur’an and that it is a command of Allah. In support of this Bullock (2003, p.42) also found that the hijab was worn for religious reasons when carrying out her research in Canada, and cites examples of women who believed that the instructions to cover could be found in the Qur’an.

A number of my interviewees not only knew where to find the instructions in the religious texts, but also expressed that they had a desire to study what had been written. They had a clear personal understanding of the religion and the rules that had been laid down at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and the reasons behind these
rules. They were not just taking them at face value and blindly following the written word, but explained that they were taking an active part in educating themselves about the religion. Many of the women could open the Qur’an to the specific verse where the reference to the wearing of the hijab is contained or could recite the passage from memory.

However, it was noted that there could sometimes be difficulties for the women when they were reading the scriptures to gain the knowledge that they required. The original version of the Qur’an was written in Arabic, which meant that the women either had to learn Arabic or many of the women had to be satisfied with translations, which may not truly reflect the message/messages in the original text.

Even though the scriptural basis comes from the Qur’an, the Hadith and the Sunnah, and are very important, the research showed that there are other social and political factors that affect the wearing of the hijab and influenced the decisions of the women interviewed. Bullock (2003, p.50) explains that those have researched the ‘re-veiling movement’ have discovered that there are a number of reasons why women put on the hijab ‘from political protest, to economic reasons, to piety’ and believes that there are ‘no easy generalizations [sic]’. According to Bullock (2003, p.50) and certainly found in my research ‘religious reasons were a strong motivating factor for the decision to cover’.

Alongside the Qur’anic instructions, the women were also sourcing other literature on the wearing of the hijab and spoke of how they were enjoying learning about their religion and making this discovery for themselves. Those who did their own research on the hijab crossed all of the boundaries of types of dress and applied to all of the categories of women interviewed. Many believed that without knowledge of why you were supposed to wear it, then, the wearing of the hijab was pointless. The following new wearers are from different backgrounds and potentially different heritage. Mrs BI (new wearer, 25-39) said: Especially since 9/11, I started reading about the religion. You are not a Muslim unless you research and understand the religion. As I have learned and read about Islam, I liked it more and more. Also, I read up about what the Prophet had said. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) asserted: I bought myself an Islamic wardrobe, but kept reading up on it. Mrs EJ (new wearer, 40+) reiterated:
I didn’t really wear it when young. I was not really aware of Islam. About four years ago, I was reading about Islam and found that the hijab is compulsory. The research that the women undertook was not always simply into the modern religious requirements associated with dress, but showed an interest in the historical setting and the context in which the revelations were made to the Prophet Muhammad. Mrs EB (non-wearer, 25-39) stated: I read a book recently by a scholar. During the first days of Islam high-class women wore the scarf to show status and then the lower class women started to wear the scarf as well.

Those women who did not wear the hijab also stipulated that the reason for wearing it was because of religious belief and although these women classed themselves as Muslims, they did not see themselves as very religious and therefore had not taken that kind of step to follow the faith. Many non-wearers also said that the basis for the wearing of the hijab was written in the Qur’an, but many stated that they had not read the verses that related to the wearing of the hijab and would not be able to find the instructions. This lack of scriptural knowledge was mainly due to the fact that the women did not have a desire to search out these instructions. Those who had a desire to wear the hijab sought out the verses and as such the knowledge of the verses could lead to a desire to wear the hijab. However, this was not an automatic conclusion and did not mean that if the women had read them, then they would automatically put on the hijab. They saw themselves as Muslims, who would wear the headscarf to carry out religious observances, but had no desire to wear the fixed hijab on a daily basis. All explained that although they did not wear the hijab they still dressed modestly and saw this as part of their Muslim duty. However, some who did not wear the hijab made it clear that other members of the Muslim community often regarded them as non-practising Muslims, because they chose not to cover their hair. Mrs DC (past wearer, 25-39) reiterated: Just because I am not wearing the hijab doesn't mean I am not a Muslim. Just by putting on the hijab doesn't make you a proper Muslim. Mrs EC (non-wearer, 40+) agreed: People don't think I am a Muslim because I don't cover.

Agreeing that the wearing of the hijab does not necessarily make you a Muslim is Miss EH (non-wearer, 25-39) who explained how her Dad: Has seen women wearing hijab, smoking and snogging boys. Dwyer (1999, p.18) whose research was carried out with school girls and therefore her participant group is very different to mine, in
contrast to the hijab not always meaning that a woman was a practising Muslim, found a belief among some Muslims that girls who wore the hijab could get away with things that non-wearers would not be able to get away with. They thought that ‘she’ll get away with it because she’s got that cover’, but emphasised that it was not right that girls wearing the hijab should be allowed to behave inappropriately and get away with it. Dwyer’s (1999, p.18) respondents also questioned the commitment of these girls and thought ‘that wearing it could not be done casually and those respondents who did not wear the hijab explained how they ‘were not yet ready for such a commitment’.

An important point however, is that nearly all of the non-wearers said that they wore the headscarf for activities such as: going to the mosque; praying; reading/reciting the Qur’an; and if they attended a religious occasion, even though they would not put it on to go out into the wider community. Although certain venues such as mosques have dress requirements that all visitors including non-Muslims doing research must adhere to, these other activities were regarded as important to the women who expressed a level of respect that is required when carrying out religious duties. The rituals associated with prayer and the recitation of the Qur’an in Islam are often part of a tradition that was set at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and these have been continued without question over the centuries.

Some of these women who did not wear the hijab were deciding by listening and reading for themselves that the non-wearing of the scarf is compatible with a strict following of Islam. Mrs DA (past wearer, 25-39) observed: I believe in the Qur’an, but there are interpretations. According to my interpretations I believe in the ethical and moral hijab. I don’t believe in the physical hijab. Mrs DB (past wearer, 40+) stated: Women wear it because it is in the Qur’an, but there are different levels. Mrs EA (past wearer, 25-39) elected: I have seen a programme that said that the wearing of hijab isn’t compulsory. An Imam on it said it’s open to translation. Mrs EJ (non-wearer, 40+) also felt that she was doing the right thing in the eyes of God by not covering: I thought you would ask if I struggled, because it is in the Qur’an. No I don't struggle at all with God. God created me and this is my path and the way I do it. Other women agreed with these sentiments and believed that the Qur’anic texts were very much open to interpretation by the women themselves. Mrs BI (new wearer, 25-
The Qur’an is open to interpretation: 1. Women of believers should cover their hair and cleavage; 2. They should distinguish themselves by wearing the jilbab; and 3. It makes reference to being decent and covering to avoid attraction.

Although the word *ijtihad* was not mentioned by any of the interviewees, it was clear from their responses that some of the women were using a modern form of this concept. They were interpreting the texts and making the decisions themselves whether to wear or not to wear the *hijab*. However, other Islamic scholars and *Imams* see the concept of *ijtihad* in a different way and believe that it was a tool to be used to legislate on matters that could not be resolved conclusively from the text of the Qur’an.

An *Imam* who was spoken to by me, explained that:

*Ijtihad means for a scholar to do his/her best effort through knowledge tools, wisdom and piety to find the correct ruling for a particular issue, which is not clearly stated in the Qur’an and Hadith.*

This process was originally the tool of Islamic scholars to be used for the good of the *Umma* in the period after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. It was used to help to judge situations, but as time passed the process became out of favour with the lawyers. This research shows that with the increase in interest in Islam in the West there is now occurring alongside the wearing of the *hijab* a reinterpretation of this process, not by scholars, but by the women that are affected by the Islamic rulings.

As with all religions, the research shows an internal representation of different ways of being a Muslim. Found amongst the women was a range of religious beliefs, from those women who were completely immersed in everything to do with their religion, the practising and scarf wearing Muslims who were confident about doing the ‘right’ thing, to those women who were non-practising Muslims. Thus these women reflected the make-up of British society as a whole, and although these women were collectively classed as Muslims they were also members of a much wider group.

The expectation was that the women who wore the *hijab* would say that they had started to wear it once they had reached puberty, in accordance with the teachings of Islam found in the Qur’an and the *Hadith*. The fact that this was not the case offered a fascinating insight into the differing lives of the women. Although all Muslims, the
paths taken in their journey to put on the *hijab* were all very different, but ultimately they reached the same conclusion.

**5.6. Responses to the *hijab***

When asked about the responses that the women get when they wear the *hijab*, the idea of respect was a theme that re-appeared throughout the interviews; the women expressed the view that they felt more respected when wearing the *hijab*. They all attached a great deal of importance to being respected by the Muslim community and to the women this was a very important aspect of the wearing of the *hijab*. The wearers expressed the view that once they put on the *hijab*, they were treated with more respect, and in particular by men - not just by Muslim men, but also by non-Muslim men who would be more respectful as they could see from the dress of the women that they were Muslims and were therefore not available.

Discussing the major advantages of wearing the *hijab* that came out of her research, Bullock (2003, p.52) identifies how the *hijab* helps with the public relationships between men and women and explains that ‘A public space free of sexual tensions is seen as a more harmonious and peaceful place for human beings’. This shows a slight difference in our findings as my interviewees did not explicitly talk about the issue of ‘sexual tension’ in public spaces although were very aware of the differing treatment that they received when out of the house. The women Bullock (2003, p.53) spoke to noticed that once they had put on the *hijab* the men they encountered ‘were more respectful’, particularly the converts who had put on the *hijab* later in life, who felt that men ‘treated them as ‘persons’ instead of ‘sex-objects’’. Validating this in my research is Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) who expressed that: *I want to be seen as human being not sexy lady*. Contractor (2012, p.90) also reports how her participants did not want to be seen as ‘a sexual object’, but wanted to be ‘recognised as a complete individual’. However, what is interesting to note from the research of Bullock (2003, p.54) is that some of the non-wearing Muslim women resented the fact that Muslim men were ‘more reserved’ with the women who covered and thought that it was ‘hypocritical of people to treat you more respectfully just because you wore long clothes’.
The feeling of being respected by non-Muslim women in Britain was reflected upon by some of my interviewees. Mrs AA (long-term wearer, 40+) indicated that: *Even older women in Britain show you respect.* One idea that was voiced regarding this issue was the fact that once you put on the *hijab*, sometimes those Muslims who do not wear it feel guilty, and a particular wearer who also wears the *niqab* felt that she was treated with hostility, not by the non-Muslims, but by members of her own community. Although one of the women classed herself as a non-wearer she thought that to show respect to a new family that she was marrying into it was necessary for her to alter the form of dress that she had worn before.

Another theme that came from the wearers and non-wearers was that the *hijab* was worn for protection, specifically protection from men. Even those who did not wear the *hijab* were making a link between the women being covered and it being a form of protection from unwanted advances and looks. Those who did not wear the *hijab* noticed a lack of respect and protection, in particular the occasional wearer who had noticed a huge change since she had stopped wearing her *hijab*. She not only felt less respected, but was often approached by men, which had not happened to her previously when she had worn the *hijab*. Bullock (2003, p.56) also includes testimony from women who noticed a difference in ‘the way non-Muslim men treated her’ before and after her wearing of the *hijab* and how they would ‘apologize [*sic*] if they swore’. In contrast to my findings there was even the belief amongst some of Bullock’s (2003) interviewees that the *hijab* would be a ‘protection for women, even against rape’. There was a sense from Bullock’s (2003, p.57) findings that women were ignored when they wore the *hijab* and that they ‘no longer had to suffer whistles and catcalls in the street’. Continuing with the idea of protection, some of the women I spoke to also expressed the idea that once they were wearing the *hijab* they were protected from being tempted by men and from engaging in immoral acts. Mrs BF (new wearer, 25-39) said: *Hijab protects you from doing sins and smoking or going to a club.* Bullock (2003, p.57) also notes how her participants were protected from ‘going to unsuitable movies or mixing with unacceptable people like drug-takers’ when they were wearing the *hijab*. One of the women I interviewed was happy to go about her daily life without the *hijab*, but felt the need to cover if at functions within her own community if there were to be men present.
Alongside the notions of women being treated with respect and protected when they wear the hijab, Bullock (2003, p.55) differs from my research as she discovered that to a number of her participants the hijab was a benefit to both men and women. It not only protected women from the advances of men, but it also ‘helped husbands not to be attracted to women other than their wives’ and one of her women ‘joked’ that ‘men did not appreciate the sacrifice that she was making for them’. As my research asked the women about their own lives and the wearing of the hijab, discussion of the benefits to men were not asked about.

Therefore for the majority of my interviewees there was a notion of feeling respected and being seen as special within their communities when the headscarf was worn. Also, the protection felt by the women was a very important aspect of their lives within their communities and when they went out into the wider society as a whole. Contractor (2012, p.86) notes how her participants also ‘referred to the comfort, protection and confidence’ that they felt when they wore the hijab and suggests that this could be a widespread feeling amongst a number of Muslim women across Britain.

Long-term wearers could not really explain any different responses between wearing the hijab and not wearing it. The theme that ran through all of these answers was that it was expected of them within the communities in which they lived and if the women decided to remove their scarves the community would be shocked. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) described: *The community would be shocked if I took my scarf off*. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) added: *I live in a Bangladeshi community, so it is expected of you.* Mrs AC, (long-term wearer, 25-39) affirmed: *I live in a predominantly Asian society, so it is the accepted thing.* The idea of friends being shocked was supported by Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) who chose to remove her headscarf in front of some non-Muslim women and told of their surprise of seeing her without her hijab: *English friends are surprised when they see me without my hijab.* There was testimony from a couple of the women that friends and other Muslims had been congratulatory and supportive. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: *When I first wore the scarf, friends were very supportive. Western friends were very interested in why I wore it.* Miss AH (long-term wearer, under 25) responded: *My Muslim friends said congratulations for wearing it.* Others spoke of
the positive reactions or lack of any reactions that they had experienced when wearing the hijab in Britain. Mrs AC (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: *I go to Manchester, but no one has ever said anything. No one really looks twice at me in Manchester.* Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) added: *Some Westerners are very polite.*

The responses that the new wearers experienced were also considered by the women to be positive when coming from other Muslims. The common theme that ran through these answers was that the communities in which they were living were really pleased with their decisions to put on the hijab. Mrs BD (new wearer, 25-39) remarked: *In my community it’s really positive. I started wearing the jilbab at work. Nobody has said anything negative.* Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) concurred: *The community look down on people because of their image, but talk highly of me.* Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) affirmed: *Muslims are really happy that I have converted.*

The women I interviewed who were born into Muslim families all spoke of positive experiences when putting on the hijab, Bullock (2003, p.68) in contrast in her studies found women who were facing opposition from their Muslim families as they feared that their daughters ‘would not be able to get married’. One woman in particular eventually found support from other Muslim friends who helped her ‘to go against the wishes of her family’. Dwyer (1999, p.17) like Bullock (2003), also found evidence of a young woman who had put on the hijab and who had ‘faced considerable resistance… from her mother’ who would not go out with her. However, in this instance the reasoning behind the refusal to be seen with her daughter was because it ‘undermined her mother’s authority’ and claimed ‘a moral and religious superiority’. Unlike my participants, this pupil also received a lack of support from her Muslim friends whereas her non-Muslim friends were really encouraging.

These responses towards the women tended to be slightly more negative when coming from non-Muslims, although generally the women were pleased that they had made the change even if shyness was sometimes felt in front of Western colleagues at work. Mrs BL (new wearer, 25-39) answered: *I felt shy in front of those I worked with as they had already seen me uncovered.* Those who had experienced hostility tended to be those women who had started to wear the hijab as adults, although these experiences tended to be very short lived and took many different forms. Mrs EJ (new
wearer, 40+) found that work colleagues were suddenly being deliberately hurtful: *I had some bad experiences when I started to wear the hijab. I was upset but said my du'ahs and it got better.* Bullock (2003, p.46) found similar evidence from one of her participants, who when putting on the *hijab* received such negative comments from her work colleagues that she took it off, and did not put it on again until much later.

The occasional wearers were unique in the way that they were living with two dimensions to their lives. As can be seen from the testimony of Mrs AE (occasional wearer, 40+) when she converted to Islam the non-Muslim community she came from were not happy to see her in a *hijab*, although the Muslim community into which she moved were pleased. Then when she decided not to wear the *hijab* the same Muslims did not like to see her removing the *hijab*: *When I put the scarf on non-Muslims didn't like the idea. The Muslim community didn't like me taking the scarf off.* Miss CB (occasional wearer, under 25) told how she still puts it on for work, to negate any responses either positive or negative from her Muslim employers. Her parents understood her reasoning behind taking it off and were very supportive of her actions: *Mum wasn't really happy when I took it off, but agreed with me. I want to do it only for God, not to impress the family.* Silvestri (2009) whose research was carried out in Turin, London and Brussels to ‘provide snapshots of the day-to-day experience’ of Muslim women living in Europe includes cultural differences to my work that was carried out in various locations in Britain, although similarly my research does include some women in London. Silvestri (2009, p.9) clarifies that the wearing of the *hijab* is about ‘negotiating their identities as European Muslims’ and how the women have to deal ‘with their family, with the religious community, with their Muslim and non-Muslim friends and neighbours, at school and at work’ and this negotiation can also be witnessed amongst the responses from my participants.

When the interviewees were asked specifically about hostility, the responses from the women fitted into three distinct categories: those who felt that they had never received any hostility; those who had experienced a degree of hostility prior to 9/11; and those who had been on the receiving end of name calling, contemptuous looks and verbal abuse or knew other Muslim women that had post 9/11. Those without any hostility tended to live in tolerant areas of the country or sheltered Muslim communities such as Oldham. Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) described how: *Nothing bad has ever
happened to me – touch wood. I don’t even believe in that why am I touching wood. No racism or hostility. Miss SB2 (new wearer, under 25) was in agreement: My neighbours are all white, but I haven’t noticed any reactions. She felt that: Westerners don’t even look at you and don’t bother what you wear. Mrs BC (new wearer, 25-39) commented: A woman in hijab and covered will just be ignored. This is what Islam wants; women shouldn’t be the centre of attraction.

The women voiced the opinion that it was when they moved out of their Muslim circles that the intolerance and hostility were felt. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) was called a bloody Muslim when she had visited another town and was getting money out of a cash machine. She recounted: I was upset but didn’t know what to do. I don’t know what he was thinking, maybe the war in Iraq. Some of the women explained that as an identifiable minority they already received low-level hostility, and therefore they did not notice any changes post 9/11. Miss SP1 (new wearer, 25-39) claimed: A few English people stare or make a remark. I haven’t really experienced that. You get that anyway being Asian you get racist remarks. Miss SB2 (new wearer, under 25) concurred: Sometimes if you cover your face people look at you. But not if you just wear the hijab, only if you put the niqab on. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) disclosed: Sometimes I receive hostility because it is out of the norm. I got a dirty look the other day, just for asking for milk shake in a shop. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) claimed: British people think all Muslims are Pakis and in agreement with this Bullock (2003, p.74) illustrates how her participants felt that ‘overall they did not receive too many hostile reactions’, although proceeds to cite a number of examples of women who she believes ‘are often harassed by strangers because of the way they dress’.

Some of the women felt that this hostility was expressed by treating the women as if they were stupid and sometimes people who did not know the women would talk to them using sign language, as if they would not understand what is being said. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) had experienced that kind of behaviour: I have noticed racism and people talking to me in sign language. I feel sorry for them and their ignorance. Contractor (2012, p.85) in her research with Muslim women in Britain also validates this idea as she noted how the hijab wearing women were ‘often perceived as undereducated or uneducated women who cannot speak English’ and as
noted in the literature review Anwar and Shah (2000, p.225) who carried out their research with Muslim women in Birmingham pre-9/11 also included testimony from Muslim women who felt as though they were treated as if they were uneducated and unable to speak English. Silvestri (2009, p.12) also found that her participants expressed the opinion that ‘Europeans’ are ‘wrongly assuming that they are oppressed and illiterate’ because they wear the *hijab*.

Post 9/11, hostility was a thread that wove through the narratives of the women and it became apparent that some of the women now felt afraid or uncomfortable leaving the house. Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) was convinced that her life had been put at risk because of 9/11: *From the general public, a couple of times I have been targeted because of the hijab. After 9/11 I was nearly run over outside the school twice.* Teenagers in the street post 9/11 had approached Mrs AA (long-term wearer, 40+): *I was bumped into by one who screamed at me. I didn’t understand what it was she said. I ignored it and said to myself please God help me.* Mrs AE (long-term wearer, 25-39) believed: *They separate out the women who wear the hijab. Also they think Muslims are terrorists and fundamentalists.* Mrs AB (long-term wearer, 25-39) reported: *Someone I know had a man keep shouting at her in London. When walking in the evening on my own I feel afraid and uncomfortable.* Contractor (2012, p.85) when reporting her findings describes how some of her participants considered themselves to be ‘the victims of hate crimes’, and put this down to the wearing of the *hijab*. Bullock (2003, p.81), also concurs that some of her participants believed that ‘we have come to the stage where we are nothing but terrorists and bombers’.

This hostility became even more apparent when the women visited other countries, even if they were nationals of those particular countries. Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) used to visit Italy and in the past did not have a problem with entering the country, but since 9/11, she felt that the immigration officials now took a long time looking at her passport: *They used to be very friendly when I went back to Italy. Now they look at my passport so many times.* Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) reported her experience of a hostile response as an émigré, who occasionally visited her French family: *It’s very hard for my family. I don’t see them that often. They are not comfortable, and don’t want to be seen out with me.* Not only do her parents not want to be seen with her, but her parents’ neighbours in France cancelled a dinner date that had been arranged,
because they did not want to eat with a Muslim wearing a hijab: I had a very negative response from my neighbour, who cancelled dinner. It is unacceptable for me to wear this in France.

5.7. Changes to the use of hijab

These questions were sensitive because they related to personal faith and were deliberately held back until the end of the interview. By asking these questions at this point in the interview the women were relaxed and the questions came as part of a natural progression. If they had been asked earlier or at the beginning of the interview they would have been out of context and may not have elicited the thoughtful and hopefully honest responses that the women gave. This also gave the opportunity for the answers to be spontaneously given earlier in the interview. The questions asked were to elaborate on practice and to discover whether there was a link to their beliefs manifesting in a different manner and if the changes were faith or non-faith based.

When looking at the responses about changes post 9/11, it was first thought to be advantageous to look at the responses from the women according to the five categories of dress. However, three distinct themes soon occurred irrespective of what the women were wearing. There were those who had not made any changes to their dress, those who had made changes, and those who knew other women who had made significant changes. The women who had not made any changes came from a cross section of the interviewees and included those who wore and did not wear the hijab. Those wearers who had not made changes said that they were not going to remove their hijab for any reason and were content to be visible as Muslim women. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: No, I haven't changed my dress because of them, and I wouldn't take my hijab off for any reason. Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) concurred: No, my dress hasn't changed.

Some of the women who did not wear the hijab explained that people in Britain do not even know that they are Muslims. Many of the women were British born and without the identifiable type of dress these women could belong to any faith group. However, among the women who were interviewed there was the belief that these events had not made women who did not wear the hijab put it on. Mrs EF (non-
wearer, 25-39) declaimed: *9/11 didn't make me think about putting on the headscarf.* Mrs RK (long-term wearer, under 25) asserted: *9/11 wasn't a trigger to make me put on the hijab.* Although those women who did not wear the hijab were not motivated by 9/11 to put it on, many of the women explained how the event had made them think more about their religion in general and how they were perceived as Muslim women. There were no unintentional changes reported.

The women, who had the most to say on the topic of change, were those who had adopted the hijab in later life. Even amongst those who had adopted the hijab in recent times, there were those who made further adjustments in the light of 9/11. The reason behind the changes was to blend in with the Western society in which they lived, so as to avoid any unwanted attention. A couple of the women who had removed their hijab when coming to live in this country had also stipulated in their interviews, that the reason for removing their head covering was to fit in with the society in which they had come to live. Mrs DB (past wearer, 40+) elected: *It is ok if I wear it in London, but what about other towns. People will look at me and this is not the purpose.*

Mrs BA (new wearer, 25-39) was very fearful after 9/11 and throughout the winter that followed, decided to wear a wool hat instead of her hijab when out in public to disguise her Muslim identity, as she felt too visible in her hijab in the area in which she lived: *When I was wearing my winter hat, people would smile at me.* This blending in was, she felt, for her own safety and to make sure that she was treated the same as any Western woman. In her opinion: *Things calmed down for a while and then exploded again after the Iraq war.* As a non-British citizen she was even too frightened to admit that she came from Saudi Arabia: *I used to say that I was Turkish if asked where from.* Even though at the time of her interview she felt that things had settled down, she still felt apprehensive about going out once it got dark: *I don't go out in the dark, especially with my children, as I am worried that I will be attacked.* Although a very talkative and friendly woman it has left her with a fear of talking to strangers: *I won't talk to strangers and read on the bus and ignore everyone.* Bullock (2003, p.80), also believed that due to ‘negative reactions’ when wearing the hijab that ‘many Muslims try to hide their Islamic identity’ and try to look more Western.
Mrs BI (new wearer, 25-39) who often covered her head with an unconventional hijab or a hat, recounted that: *I work with the police, in places of high security. I was asked to take my hat off and did, but I don't think that they realised what they were asking me to do.*

Mrs BM (new wearer, aged 25-39) being aware of the possible repercussions that 9/11 could have, chose to change the colours of her Islamic dress to blend in with the population more. She stated that she had worn lighter colours to blend in with the British society in which she was living: *To blend in I have worn cream and beige, as I felt that at this time Muslims were automatically all labelled terrorists.* Mrs BM went on to explain that some Muslims had already been attacked in the area in which she lived, so to protect herself she changed just the colours of her dress: *It didn't make me take my scarf off, this I wouldn't do.* According to Mrs BM’s interpretation of the religious law: *If harm comes, it will be the will of God.* At the time of her interview she had already gone back to wearing darker colours and the complete hijab with the niqab. Miss AH (long-term wearer, under 25) when discussing changes replied: *Not really, once after 9/11, a man said something to me. I was scared and I didn't want to wear it anymore, but I kept it on and everything was ok.*

Although not all of the women consulted for this research had made changes themselves, there was evidence to suggest that other women they knew had made changes to the way that they dressed post 9/11. These changes however, were not the removal of the hijab, which they saw as an acceptable form of Islamic dress to be worn in Britain, but the niqab, which was considered to be an extreme form of dress that would attract the wrong type of attention and was not necessary. Miss AK (long-term wearer, 25-39) offered: *No, but I know people who have changed dress because of this. People who covered their face have taken it off, because of this. Not the hijab, just the face covering.* Mrs DB (past wearer, aged 40+) concurred: *And some of them have taken it off. They have taken off the niqab and left the hijab on. Some have taken the hijab off to avoid attention.* Most of these women felt secure in Britain wearing the hijab, but were aware that the face veil was a form of dress that was conspicuous within the society in which they were living and felt safer removing it.
There is an ongoing discussion amongst scholars as to whether the *niqab* is necessary and therefore these women may have seen taking it off, as a reasonable step to take that would not compromise their religious duty. At the time of 9/11, some scholars including the late Dr Badawi were advising the women to remove their *hijab* if they felt that they were under threat or in danger. Some of the women interviewed for this research, although warned by others to remove the *hijab* had refused and told of their pleasure that nothing untoward had happened to them. Those who had a strong faith in Allah believed that they were under his protection and if anything bad was to happen to them then it would be his will. Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) disclosed: *After September 11th I went to the States. My husband said to take my hijab off to look Indian. I wouldn't take it off.* Mrs AE (long-term wearer, 25-39) attested: *I was advised at that time that I should not wear my scarf. But I felt no, if my God has written that it will happen then it will. I had a very strong feeling that I shouldn't take my scarf off.*

Those women who did not wear the *hijab* were often unaffected by such events, as they were not openly recognisable as Muslims by the way that they dressed. Although these events had brought Islam to the forefront of many people’s minds the women interviewed for this research were not persuaded to put on the *hijab* because of this. Mrs DE (past wearer, 40+) emphasised: *It hasn't made me want to put my headscarf on.* However, they could see around them in the communities in which they lived that there was now a higher percentage of Muslim girls wearing the *hijab* than there was when they were younger and at school. Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) declared: *Seven years ago one in ten were wearing the hijab, now eight out of ten are wearing the hijab.*

At this stage the pervading sense was that these changes to dress when they occurred were deliberate and intentional to protect the women from what they perceived to be a threat to their safety. Therefore it can be seen from this study that a number of women in this sample had made changes to their dress and were making the choice as adults to put on the *hijab*. Whether this was due to conversion into the religion or Muslims returning to a stricter practising of their faith the outcome was the same. There is an increase in the wearing of the *hijab* among Muslim women in Britain.
The research identified themes relating to changes in the religious behaviour of the women. Many of the women stated that their religious beliefs had been strengthened by these events, but they also spoke of sadness that they now felt about how Islam was being seen and worried about the future of the religion. Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) commented: *I read the Qur’an every morning. It says I should not be aggressive. Very very stronger, yes stronger.* Mrs EF (non-wearer, 25-39) explained: *No change has made us stronger.* The women, who expressed the feelings of sadness, came from different areas of the country, but all said the same thing about the after effects of 9/11. Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) confessed: *At times I get very cross and upset, I wish people would understand.* Miss AF (long-term wearer, under 25) was in agreement: *I feel very sad, but my life hasn’t changed in any way.* Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) described her views: *I feel sad, sorry, and confused, this is not the religion of Islam. The word Islam means peace and so much of our teaching is peace.* Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) asserted: *I am more aware of religion and sad when they make the link with terrorism. There hasn’t been any terrorism in history.*

It could be seen from their responses that the women were fearful that these ‘terrorists’ were misrepresenting Islam and were giving the wrong impression of the Islamic faith. Mrs EB (non-wearer, 25-39) reported: *People are giving Islam a bad name. People don’t like what the fundamentalists are doing.* The women expressed a desire to educate those in the West to the truth about Islam and were trying to be good representatives of the faith. Mrs AB (long-term wearer, 25-39) commented: *I try to behave so others understand the religion. This is my religion, not what others did in the States.* These women also wanted to make it clear that these Muslims who carried out the 9/11 attacks were not following the teachings of the religion. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) revealed: *I think these events have made me stronger. The people that did it were wrong.* Mrs DE (past wearer, 40+) added: *It has made me stronger, but also made me a bit ashamed. This is not really Islam.* Some also held the view that others had carried it out to discredit Islam. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) thought: *Other countries must be behind it.* Miss CB (occasional wearer, under 25) remarked: *It has made me closer to my religion. I don’t believe that 9/11 was carried out by Muslims anyway. The Iraq War was just for oil.*
Bullock (2003, p.44) found that at least one of her participants was worried about the ‘political overtones’ that might be associated with the wearing of the *hijab* and didn’t want people to think that she was wearing the *hijab* to make a political statement. The interviewees for this research did not identify their wearing of the *hijab* with making a political statement and unlike Bullock’s (2003) participant did not appear to hold the fear that they would be seen this way in Britain.

Discussions relating to the banning of what the French government deemed to be religious symbols caused strong reactions from the women. The women had all heard of the controversy and had formed their own opinions of what was really happening. Many of the interviewees irrespective of their own dress were strongly against the ban. Mrs AB (long-term wearer, 25-39) verbalised: *Muslim women have no choice, they must wear it.* Mrs DC (past wearer, 25-39) felt: *It is not right that they are not allowed to wear it. Stopping a person that really wants to wear it is going backwards.* Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) disagreed with the decision: *I think it is absolutely terrible. Islam is the religion most affected by that.*

Many of the women saw it as an attack on Islam by the French Government and not really about the wearing of the *hijab* by the Muslim women. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) perceived it as the government attacking the religion: *This in France is coming from the government. Not a nice thing for Muslims in France.* She was of the opinion: *I don’t think Muslims will go along with it.* However, some of the women who had chosen not to wear the *hijab* were in favour of the ban. Mrs DA (past wearer, 25-39) was very positive about the ban: *I think it is a good thing. When we had the Shah he did the same thing. If someone wants to live in this country they have to accept the rules.* Other women did agree that women should follow the rules of the country in which they were living even though they did not agree totally with the ban. Mrs BA (new wearer, 25-39) answered: *The Qur’an would say to follow the rules of the country you are in, don't take off the hijab, but don't cover your face to stand out. You may get attacked.*

When the women were asked whether they thought that Muslim women would comply or react against the ban, there were two distinct views. The French Muslims could either go along with it, or they could move to another country. However, the
women who were interviewed clearly would not go along with it. Mrs AA (long-term wearer, 40+) emphasised: *I wouldn't forgo the hijab for any reason, when out of the house. I do it to make me feel closer to God, and get lots of points for heaven.* She had read about the ban on the internet and in light of the issue had decided not to visit. She confessed: *I was going to visit Paris, but decided not to go when I heard.* Mrs AC (new wearer, 25-39) in light of the ban recounted: *When I went to France, I wore a thinner scarf.* However, other Muslim women who had worn the *hijab* when they visited France had found that they had not had any problems. These women did not see it as a political move by the government and did not express any objections about girls not being allowed to wear it in schools. Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) offered: *I went to Paris, but wore the scarf there too. I knew it was just about wearing the hijab in schools.* Mrs BC (new wearer, 25-39) enlarged: *I went to France recently, the French were lovely. I did hear that the girls are not allowed to wear the hijab in schools.*

When the discussions moved on to whether the women had become more European for travelling, some wore exactly the same as they would wear in Britain; but some made significant changes to the way they dressed. A *niqab* wearer since 1994 had taken hers off when she drove to Morocco via Spain. Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) admitted: *I did not take it off because of 9/11, but because I knew that there was racism in Spain.* Those who did still wear the *niqab* and *hijab* for travelling confirmed that they are not allowed to wear the *niqab* on the photograph on their passport and although they wear it for travelling they may be asked to go to a separate room to have their identity checked. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: *Airports are fine they don't look at me more than at others. Suicide bombers don't tend to look more religious than others.*

**5.8. Background Information**

Questions regarding employment, ethnicity and age were not asked in a systematic way in the original interview, but they were asked at the end if the information had not been forthcoming in the course of the interview.
Although fourteen out of the forty-two women were engaged in some form of employment, the twenty-eight that answered *No* included fourteen students. Therefore a more accurate reading would be that fourteen were employed, fourteen were students and fourteen classed themselves as housewives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (including 14 Students)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that one third of the interviewees turned out to be students was not unexpected, as at least ten of those interviewed were under twenty-five. However, not all of the under twenty-five year olds were students, and the figures reflect the fact that some mature students were interviewed. It also reflects the fact that access to some of the Muslim women was through the student community.

From the self-descriptions recorded in the data it can be seen that the sample of women came from a range of backgrounds and ethnic groupings including: Malaysian, Qatari, Saudi Arabian, Iranian, Bangladeshi, Italian, Moroccan, English, Omani, Mauritian, Somalian, Kenyan, Canadian, and French, but the majority were of Pakistani ethnic origins which would be expected given the profile of the Muslim community in Britain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Libyan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French/Algerian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the sample table it was reassuring to find that although the women were not selected by ethnicity, the interviewees came from a wide selection of ethnic backgrounds. From the data gathered it supports that the research achieved one of its aims in being able to capture some of the diversity of Muslim women in Britain.

It was not thought polite to directly ask the women in the political climate at the time, whether they considered themselves to be British, so these categories were filled in according to the responses that the women gave during the interviews. The five women, who were not British residents, were students that were here just for their studies. Only the French Muslim expressed herself as French, but living in Britain. The woman that fitted into the ‘Awaiting residency’ category was an Iranian Muslim who had applied for permanent residency in Britain.
The women interviewed were from a variety of age ranges. They were asked at the end of the interview whether they were under 25, 25–39 or 40+, as it was felt to be inappropriate to ask them outright how old they were. Many were happy to volunteer this information and ages were often discussed during the course of the interview. A minimum of ten women, from each age category, were interviewed to obtain some representative spread of the perspectives of these age groups. As the sample table was compiled it showed that the twenty-five to thirty-nine category contained the most women. This was mainly due to the fact that it was this age group that attended the women’s groups at the mosques and the activities at the Women’s Associations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Hijab</th>
<th>No hijab</th>
<th>Occasional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 +</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the ages were compared to the degree of covering, it showed that it was the younger Muslims who were wearing the *hijab*, and that they were the easiest to find, due to the fact that they could be identified as Muslims by their dress. Many of those in the twenty-five to thirty-nine age category expressed the view that they were thinking more about their religion and had considered covering, but thought that they would do so in the future when they were older. Surprisingly it was women of forty and over who wore the *hijab* that were the hardest to find.

At the end of each interview the women were asked to volunteer any information that they thought should be known about the *hijab*, but had not been mentioned during the interview. This often revealed a deeper insight to the lives of the women as it gave them a chance as Muslims to explain their feelings about the *hijab* and the wearing of it in Britain. Mrs CA (occasional wearer, 40+) expressed in her view that: *I have seen women shopping who cover and wear tight clothes, it is not right.* Mrs BI (new
wearer, 25-39) explained: *I am wearing it not because I have been asked to wear it. My husband was a bit surprised when I put it on. I am not following the teachings of a religious leader. Some asked why have you gone over to the other side. To me it was an increased act of faith.* The women were able to offer their own opinions on the *hijab* and the way it is seen in society. They were also able to comment on the way that some Muslims wear it and the way that wearers and non-wearers think it should be worn.

5.9. Summary

It is clear that the interview questions took the women on a journey from the present into the past and back again. The women interviewed were all Muslims and were empowered by being able to describe for themselves what they were wearing and from where they had obtained their form of dress. Some similarities and differences were found by others who had carried out research with Muslim women showing how the experiences of the women are not always the same.

The data gathered for my research revealed five different types of wearers: the long-term wearers, the new wearers; the non-wearers; occasional wearers; and the past wearers. Included in the new wearers were two specific categories of women, the converts and those who had experienced a renewed interest in Islam.

It was discovered that even those women who wear the *hijab* do not wear it all of the time, but are governed by rules as to when it can be removed. The *hijab* can be taken off in front of certain men that it is not permissible to marry, although it was found that some of the women wore it all of the time, even in the house, through habit or their own choice.

Some of the women explained that there was no specific dress code when it came to the wearing of the *hijab*, and there was no requirement for all Muslim women to look the same. However, the rules about what to wear were identified as being in the Qur’an and all of the interviewees regardless of their type of dress knew this.
Those questioned felt more respected by all men and women when they wore the *hijab*, they felt protected from what they perceived to be unwanted attention and their communities were pleased when they wore it. The women did feel that they received more hostility post 9/11, but some expressed the fact that some people were hostile to them anyway, so had not really noticed any difference.

Therefore it has been identified that the reasons behind the wearing of the *hijab* and the decisions made by the women are a complex mix. The information given by the women offers a fascinating insight into their lives and how they have grown and developed during their lifetime, the decisions they have made and the factors that play a part in these decisions. It is now imperative to further analyse the data to see what far reaching conclusions can be made.
Chapter Six: Themes

6.1. Introduction

When the data was analysed further it was clear that there were five distinct themes emerging: Religion/religious community, Education, Family/friends, the Clothing industry/fashion and 9/11. These were all important to the women and played a significant part when it came to their decision making with regards to the hijab. These factors will be examined in the following sub-sections and linked back to the literature review to see if there are any cases of convergence or divergence between others that have written about the wearing of the hijab and my research. The women interviewed for this research were not famous Muslim women living in the spotlight nor were they women who had made the news headlines for any reason. They were ‘ordinary’ women who lived in Britain, many of whom worked, some had husbands and some were bringing up their families. Even though they may be considered to be ‘ordinary’ women, to me these were the women with whom I really wanted to speak, in order to find out what their lives were really like and why it was that they had decided to wear the hijab. Were they really oppressed women who did not make decisions for themselves? Or was there something else going on?

6.2. Religion/religious community

There was evidence that a new interest in Islam had been generated amongst some of the Muslims interviewed. This was attributed by them to world events, and to the publicity awarded to Islam in the media. Even though this was linked to current events Al-Khattab (1998, p.74), a Muslim female writer had already noted that this interest had begun. What was being said about their religion had encouraged many women to stop and think about their way of life and the choices that they were making with regard to their religion and their dress. As a result of this increased interest many of those spoken to were turning to the Qur’an and reviewing the instructions found within it. The women were not just content to listen to what the Imams and scholars were telling them to do. In fact there was a distinct lack of reference to any members of the religious hierarchy in the interviews, as these women appeared to be bypassing the established religious authorities to interpret the scriptures for themselves. It was apparent that the final decision with regard to the wearing of the hijab was heavily
influenced by their own reading and understanding of the religious texts. Silvestri (2009, p.10) found that her participants had also ‘independently explored the faith and sought additional religious knowledge’ and lists ‘publications, associations, study groups’ as some of the sources used. According to Silvestri (2009, p.16) this ‘assertion of individual autonomy’ which can also include the wearing of the *hijab*, leads to ‘an acquisition of knowledge-thus-ownership of the faith’. This Silvestri (2009, p.16) believes is not a rejection of tradition which is an important part of the religion, but ‘By transforming the interpretation and application of tradition it redefines boundaries’.

This research shows that with the increased interest in Islam there is now occurring a reinterpretation of the process of *ijtihad*, by the women that are interested in Islamic teachings. They are reading the information for themselves and ultimately are coming up with their own ideas about whether the scarf should be worn and why. Bullock (2003, p.156) refers to *ijtihad* and how it was intended to be used by the jurists after the death of the Prophet. Bullock (2003) uses this explanation to refute Mernissi’s claims that the law ‘restricted women’ but by doing so shows clearly how the Qur’an can be interpreted differently by those who read it. The women showed that there was no single answer from the Qur’an to the attitude to the *hijab*, but that there was a broad range of choices on offer making it an individualistic choice. Afshar (2008) carried out her ‘year-long conversation with Muslim women’ in Britain as part of her investigation into Islamophobia and the additional problems that women who wear the *hijab* have to face. Although Afshar (2008, p.421) has a different focus to my study she talks of the women making their own choices and asks why ‘… young, articulate and intelligent women’ are choosing to put on the *hijab*. In answer to this she sees the *hijab* as representing a ‘freedom of choice’ that is important to ‘feminists’ and to ‘women’s rights’. Anwar and Shah (2000, p.218) also referred to women choosing to put on the *hijab* as they were ‘… living in a country where they did not have to wear it’. Contractor (2012, p.86) in parallel to the other authors mentioned also states that in making the decision whether to wear the *hijab* or not, ‘It was also their choice’.
Those interviewed who had chosen not to wear the *hijab* were also applying *ijtihad* to their discoveries, and were happy with the interpretations that they had made for themselves. They could justify their reasoning using evidence from what had been written and some were deciding for themselves that the non-wearing of the scarf was compatible with a strict following of Islam. A number of interviewees felt that the writings were susceptible to individual interpretation in keeping with that individual’s situation, rather than accepting the ‘official’ or ‘local’ interpretations passed on to them. As already shown in chapter five it was the opinion amongst some of those who did not wear the *hijab* that the wearing of it in Britain was a way of attracting attention instead of avoiding it and thought that it was only the wives of the Prophet that were expected to cover. Agreeing with this idea that the *hijab* should not be worn are Ahmed (1992, p.55), Mernissi (1991, p.93) and Franks (2001, p.129) who also makes reference to the views of Wadud-Muhsin (1992). They all believe that the *hijab* was not meant to be worn by Muslim women in general and therefore unnecessary. Silvestri (2009, p.14) reports how ‘Some Muslim women (intellectuals, writers, politicians)’ have condemned their religion claiming that it is ‘the cause of female repression and patriarchal structures in Muslim societies’, but like the majority of my interviewees her respondents did not feel that this was ‘the preferred strategy of emancipation’. Silvestri (2009, p.11) notes that amongst some Muslim women in Europe there is a ‘re-Islamisation’ occurring and this does not mean putting on the *hijab*, however the women interviewed for my research clearly felt that the wearing of the *hijab* was part of this Islamic resurgence.

Allievi (2006, p.120) also found in his research with converts that in order to blend-in with the society in which they lived they too often chose not to wear the *hijab*. However, according to some of my other interviewees, the *hijab* in Britain was not a source of attracting attention, but rather gave off the signals to other members of the public, particularly men, that these women were unobtainable. Once they had taken on the mantle of a religious woman, men knew that they should be avoided as they had made the conscious decision to reject the Western lifestyle to which many non-Muslims subscribed. They were rejecting what many have described as the decadent Western lifestyle to try to get back to a time when women did not expose their figures and drink alcohol.
Many of my interviewees tended to live in mixed communities where friends and neighbours did not wear the hijab and therefore community encouragement was not always present. Those who did not wear the hijab were very conscious of the fact that members of the Muslim community often regarded them as non-practising Muslims. Ruby (2006, p.59) also found evidence of this when she carried out her research with Muslim women in Canada. They believed that only those who covered were perceived to be practising Muslims and those who did not cover were automatically seen as not very religious. Although the women interviewed in Britain who did not wear the hijab were content with the decisions that they had made to reject the wearing of it, there did appear to be a divide amongst those who wore it and those who did not. Although those who did not wear it were listening to what was going on around them in the news, saw themselves as Muslims, and would wear the headscarf to carry out religious observances, they had made a choice not to wear the fixed hijab on a daily basis.

There was still a desire to fulfil what those who did not wear the hijab saw as their religious duty, but they wanted to do it in a modern way that was in keeping with their modern lifestyles that they experienced living in Britain. The non-wearers saw their interpretation of the rules as the correct way to live and although they admired the women for wearing the hijab, they did not see the wearing of it as necessary, when living in Britain. They saw it as an outdated idea that did not mean that you were a good practising Muslim just because you had your head covered.

All of the women spoke of the importance of the Qur’an and the high regard with which it was held, but they did not all follow the instructions found within it, word for word. For these empowered women who had studied the Qur’an for themselves, there was a broad attitude to wearing the scarf, from no scarf to maximum scarf. Wearing the hijab was no longer seen by many as just a religious obligation but an outward show of being a Muslim, and an assertion of religious identity. Haddad (2007, p.254) in her research with Muslim women in the U.S.A. also notes that one of the reasons that they are wearing the hijab is to show their Islamic identity. Therefore, the fixed hijab has become a worldwide symbol of the religion, and although based on the teachings from the Qur’an has come to mean so much more to Muslim women.
The participants for my research were also aware of their identity when wearing the hijab. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) reported: *I have my religion, and have my identity as a Muslim*. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) suggested: *Islamic dress is anyone who wears the scarf or jilbab. You can then see from their identity that they are Muslim*. Mrs EJ (non-wearer, 40+) observed: *More and more women are wearing the fixed scarf, it gives them an identity*. Miss EG (non-wearer, under 25) observed: *I like to say that I am a Muslim. I like to have that identity*. Mrs BD (new wearer, 25-39) commented: *People are looking for an identity now. It’s made a lot more people think about things*. To confirm this view, Bullock (2003, p.73) also cites an example from her participants who explained how the wearing of the hijab for her ‘[has] become part of my identity’. Silvestri (2009, p.14) also found that the majority of her participants chose an ‘often deliberately visible – Islamic identity’ and explains how this group of women contained not only dynamic activists but also women who had thought about their religion and who were showing ‘their own Muslim and female identity in a new and critical way’.

My respondents were delighted by this outward show and thought that it was a very positive dimension to their faith. The wearers were strictly adhering to what they felt was the Muslim dress code and as such would be seen and acknowledged as being appropriately dressed by other Muslims. With the increase in interest in Islam and the increase in numbers of women donning the hijab the women told how it is now easier to recognise other Muslims. They acknowledged the fact that when they wear the hijab out in the societies in which they live they have an instant connection with other Muslims that they meet and will often give a greeting to one another when they pass in the street. The research showed that the hijab that has been worn for years to express religious belief has now become a symbol to many of the women, of being a Muslim and is now a measure by which Muslims can watch out for each other and increase the number of women they know. Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) remarked: *It is nice to recognise other Muslims in London, to say hello to*.

Yaqin (2007, p.177) talks of the wearing of the hijab in Britain and relates it to minority groups expressing their identities through dress. She states that Muslim women in Britain may feel obliged to wear the hijab in order to show their ‘Muslimness’. However, although the evidence from this research appears to confirm
that the women are wearing the *hijab* to show their ‘Muslimness’ the women see it as a very positive aspect of being a Muslim rather than an obligation.

Many of the women who had put on the *hijab* later in life talked about the greater confidence that they now felt when out of the house and within the Muslim communities in which they lived.

However, it was not only the way that the women looked that boosted their confidence, but also the newfound support network that went with their deeper spiritual renewal and the following of their religious beliefs. They found that the Islamic communities, in which they lived and worked, now saw them in a different way as pious Muslims. Bullock (2003, p.71) also reports that a theme that came through from her research was the ‘inner strength and a high level of confidence and self-esteem’ that came from the wearing of the *hijab* and how it was important for women to be judged on their successes and not their beauty.

The idea that the message of Islam is now ‘out there’ recurred throughout the interviews and the increased knowledge of Islam among the women was a strong motivating force in their continued wearing of the *hijab*. As the number of *hijab* wearers in Britain increased the women found that it enabled identification of themselves with others as Muslims, and they perceived that this phenomenon was a useful side effect to wearing the *hijab*. This affiliation amongst some Muslim women could also be found in the discussions regarding the wearing of the *hijab* at home with non-Muslim women. Whereas many were content to be seen without their head covering, there was a school of thought that believed that if you did not belong to this religious group, then even though a woman you too had to be excluded from seeing what was under the scarf. Al-Qaradawi (2003, p.143) also included instructions to women regarding this matter and this attachment to the religious grouping for some of the interviewees was a higher priority than their allegiance to other women in Britain. It could be seen clearly that the *hijab* is creating a barrier among some wearers in Britain where they have a stronger identification with this distinct group of Muslims, which in turn leads to weakening of linkage with other groupings such as the non-Muslim population of Britain.
Those who did not wear the *hijab* explained that they did not have the desire to dress overtly as Muslims and their choice of clothing did not identify them as such. By not asserting their Muslim identity many Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain did not even know that they were Muslims. However, they were conscious of how other Muslims were dressing and they were imposing their own dress rules that they felt were necessary in the community in which they were living. Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39), who worked at the Women’s Association, but did not wear the *hijab*, is someone who listened to the views of the community within which she worked and dressed accordingly, so as not to cause any offence. She confessed: *I don’t always wear long sleeves. If wearing skirts, they tend to be below the knees due to the community that I work in.*

As the interviewees for this research have already shown, since 9/11 there has been a renewed interest in Islam and all aspects of Islamic life. Many Muslims have wanted to show what they believe true Islam is about and have wanted to share their religion and ideas with non-Muslims. From the small sample of converts it was possible to conclude that they chose their type of dress due to the way that they wanted to be perceived, rather than the influence of the world events, as their conversions had taken place before these had occurred. All of the converts discovered during this research had chosen to wear the *hijab*. The converts spoken to as part of this research told of how they had researched the religion and all aspects of the Islamic way of life, including the wearing of the *hijab*. They also sought guidance from friends and families to make sure that they were following the faith correctly. They generally dressed in a more conservatively Islamic way than the women born into the religion and immediately after their conversion saw the need to put on the *hijab*. Allievi (2006, p.132) also notes how the converts he researched dressed in a more ‘authentically religious’ way and came to the conclusion that this was due to the fact that they had not been born into any type of Islamic culture and therefore sought out for themselves the way they should be dressing. The behaviour of converts had already been noted by my interviewees who had been born into the faith and who saw the converts as being much stricter adherents of Islam than they were.
The new identity of converts meant that the women were now identifiable as Muslims and as such were more conscious of their behaviour when out in public. The women interviewed for this research found that they were always aware of what they felt would be appropriate behaviour. Nazlee (2001, p.29) describes this type of behaviour as being ‘… polite and well mannered and not abusive or foul mouthed’. The converts wanted to belong to their Muslim community, although there was evidence at the time of the interviews that these women took longer to be accepted by the Muslim communities in which they lived. Franks (2000, p.918) in her research with ‘white’ converts describes how many of the women spoke to expound the ‘positive elements of wearing the hijab’, and yet at the same time these women are being party to what can only be described as ‘racial abuse’. Franks (2000, p.922) explains how people find it difficult to as she calls it ‘locate’ an English Muslim’ and notes how some Muslim school girls who wore the hijab were ‘treated with hostility’ by Muslim boys of a different ethnicity. Mrs CA (occasional, 40+) explained that after 9/11 a few of her Muslim friends were spat at, but she was not and put this down to being a ‘white’ Muslim which would contradict the evidence discovered by Franks (2000). However, she did expand to say: I was accused of being a Paki which would then correlate with Franks (2000) and when Mrs CA told them the estate where she was from they shut up.

With this increase in the wearing of the hijab, the majority of the women who were interviewed were noticing that they were now being treated with more respect, not only by Muslims, but also by members of the public. In contrast Silvestri (2009, p.10) found that the women spoken to as part of her research wanted ‘to be treated as individuals who deserve to be respected’. Although there is documented evidence of attacks on Muslim women in Britain, those interviewed for this research spoke overwhelmingly of how they were generally treated in a much more positive way by Muslims and non-Muslims once they had made the choice to put on the hijab. Their outward show of Muslim identity they considered was not a thing to be feared, but rather with the number of women wearing the hijab increasing the women spoke of how they felt safer in Britain then they did in other countries.
The solidarity found amongst the Muslim women who were wearing the *hijab* and the increased exposure that Islam was receiving in the media, meant that these women were not alone, but again part of what appeared to be an ever growing group of women who were proud to stand out as Muslim women. Some of the women did not even feel that they stood out, but felt that they were left alone to get on with their own lives. At some point women have spontaneously seen how Islam is being portrayed and due to this misrepresentation have joined forces to make a stand against the West and the values that it holds. Instead of spending time focusing on the way that they looked the interviewees were more interested in spending time reading about the religion and gaining the knowledge that they believed was necessary to live life as a practising Muslim.

Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) had already mentioned her boost in confidence since wearing the *hijab*, but also added: *I can concentrate on what really matters, serious things rather than looks.* Alongside this liberation came the idea from Mrs BK that now her mind is free to think about more important things in her life other than what she is wearing. As a convert to Islam she found that the things that she used to worry about no longer bothered her and she spent much more time focusing on her life and her religion.

For those who do and do not wear the *hijab* there was a notion of feeling respected and being seen as special within their communities when the headscarf was worn. Also, the protection felt by the women was a very important aspect of their lives within their communities and when they went out into the wider society as a whole.

Therefore, it can be seen from the interviews that what came out of the research most clearly was the overwhelming fact that although the women are listening to the differing views on the wearing of the *hijab* and are searching out the information, ultimately they are coming to their own conclusions as to whether to wear the *hijab* or not and their religious beliefs are clearly informing these choices.
6.3. Education

The two Women’s Associations that were visited as part of this research were providing lessons and group sessions for the Muslim women in their areas. These lessons provided the women with a forum where they could join together, talk about issues, listen to each other and be educated about the tenets of the Islamic faith. These played a very important role in the Islamic education of the women as it gave them the opportunity to investigate the views of other women regarding the wearing of the hijab, they were then discussing the wearing of it and were passing on information about their dress codes to friends and family. Ultimately many of the women who attended these classes found a renewed interest in their religion and with this an increased awareness of Islamic dress, and a greater commitment to the wearing of the hijab. They saw the teachers as role models, they trusted them, and wanted to follow the examples that they were setting. The way that one of the teachers dressed and her teachings about Islam were regarded by the women as very inspirational and had a huge influence on many of the women’s decisions to wear the hijab.

Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) at one of the Women’s Associations stated: *I covered but not the headscarf until about three years ago. I started Islamic studies and decided to wear the hijab. I didn't wear it as a teenager. I would have a see through scarf to put over my head.* Mrs BB continued: *I did Islamic Studies at this Association. There was no pressure, but most of class started to wear the scarf. We talked about history, and dress. I was very inspired by the teacher, and have become friends. I thought I would give it a go.* Mrs BC (new wearer, 25-39) who was a member of staff at the Association had also put on her hijab after attending these classes and reiterated: *For the past four years I have worn it. I didn't wear it at school; it has been on and off. I gained more knowledge of Islam four years ago. I have become a role model for my children. They are wearing scarves in their primary school.*

These Muslim women who had listened to her talks found that, as a group, if they were not already wearing the hijab when they started the lessons, they were wearing it by the end of them. As a group these women felt a bond, and the link between them was not only their faith, but also their desire to be recognised as Muslim women.
Women who already had an interest in the religion were able to increase their knowledge of their religion and strengthen their belief in the Islamic faith. Read and Bartkowski (2000) who carried out their research in the U.S.A with women who they describe as ‘middle-class, well-educated Muslim women’ chose to interview a very different set of women to mine who were from a variety of backgrounds. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.403) also talk of a Muslim woman ‘… hearing several prominent Muslim speakers’ that had visited her school to talk about the benefits of wearing the veil and explain how this was a great influence on her decision to put on the veil, just as some of the women from this research had been inspired by a teacher at their Women’s Association. Dwyer (1999, p.16) also reports how there was a ‘rejuvenation of the Muslim society’ in the two schools that she visited and like the Women’s Associations, these ‘provided talks about Islam’. According to Dwyer (1999, p.17), these talks led to ‘an increased orthodoxy’ among some of the pupils and this was reflected in their ‘more explicitly Islamic dress’ which often included the wearing of the *hijab*.

Alongside having teachers visiting to educate the women in Islamic studies, the Associations also organised trips for interested participants to attend conferences to listen to other speakers from the wider Islamic community. There was a real sharing of information, and it was mentioned that one of the aims of going to these conferences was to obtain more knowledge of Islam and the wearing of the *hijab*. They instigated a support network for those who already wore the *hijab*, but wanted to find out more, and for the women who were trying the *hijab* for the first time. The women interviewed who had attended these conferences had found them very motivating. They went with the purpose of finding out about the religion for themselves but found that they were inspired by the other women there and as a result embraced the idea of putting on the *hijab* and following their faith in a more overt way. There was again the real sense of belonging to a special group of women. The descriptions of these meetings and those conferences that were mentioned during the research were very much based on a group of evangelical women spreading the word of Islam and the onlookers becoming increasingly engaged with the atmosphere, which encouraged them to be practising Muslims and to go out and wear the *hijab*. 
The women fed off each other and were enthused as a group, supporting each other to become more involved in their faith and were only then exploring the instructions on what to wear from the Qur’an. They were as a result making what they felt to be informed choices based on the knowledge gained and felt that they were deciding for themselves what they thought that they should be wearing as Muslim women. However, not all of the women found what they were looking for and found the experience quite daunting. One interviewee bemoaned the fact that there was so much information out there on the wearing of the hijab that sometimes it was difficult to know which to trust and who to listen to.

It turned out that many of the women interviewed for my research were college or University educated and that this period of their lives was significant in the putting on or not putting on of the hijab, which was also noted by Anwar and Shah (2000, p.229). There was testimony from some of the women that it was finishing college that motivated them to put on the hijab. Mrs BD (new wearer, 25-39) stated that she put on the hijab: After I left college. Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) concurred that she too had put on the hijab: Just before going to Uni. According to Miss ED (non-wearer, 25-39) she believed that there was a certain amount of pressure for Muslim girls to put on the hijab at University and thought that after attending a meeting: I would have to wear a scarf. She chose not and claimed that her mother had told her: I would get over it. Dwyer (1999, p.19) also found that some of her participants thought that they would put on the hijab ‘when they went to university’, as it would be a ‘fresh start’. Some also thought that wearing the hijab at University would give them a ‘sense of security in negotiating an unfamiliar or potentially threatening environment’ which was not a reason voiced by my respondents.

The wearing of the hijab in school also came up as a topic of discussion. There was evidence from some of the older interviewees that they had not worn the hijab in school when they were younger. Mrs AC (long-term wearer, 25-39) explained: I didn’t cover my head at school, it wasn’t as common then. I covered my head out of school and at home. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) had a similar experience when she was at her school although: I went to a strict school and couldn’t wear headscarf. I wasn’t bothered, although I may be now.
The 25-39 interviewees appeared to bypass the wearing of the *hijab* in school and put it on slightly later when they had finished college or started at University and therefore unlike the evidence of Anwar and Shah (2000, p.228) the women did not speak of any hostility or discrimination received when they were at school. Bullock (2003, p.77) also confirms that out of all of her interviewees ‘only two’ wore the *hijab* to school and therefore, did not appear to have any problems wearing it. The wearing of the *hijab* in schools as noted in the literature review (Sarwar 1994, Anwar and Shah 2000, Versi 2001, Buaras 2004, Johnston 2005) has changed over the years in Britain and some of the high profile cases have meant that Muslim girls wearing the *hijab* as part of their uniforms is now a common sight. There was some evidence from my research that the younger interviewees had worn the *hijab* at school. Miss AK (long-term wearer, under 25) did not have a problem and spoke about putting on the *hijab* when: *I was still at school*. Miss AH (long-term wearer, under 25) recalled how: *I wore it to school, as they didn't have a uniform.*

There was also evidence of girls wearing the *hijab* on the way to school and then taking it off once they were out of sight of their parents. Miss CB (occasional wearer, under 25) confirmed: *Lots of girls at school would wear the hijab and take it off when they got to school. They think they are cheating their parents, but they are not.* Dwyer (1999, p.18) notes how the girls she interviewed wore the *hijab* on the way to school, but then removed it in the classroom, but in contrast to my evidence explains that in her opinion this as way to ‘negotiate different spaces’. Werbner (2007, p.179, italics in original) also refers to the wearing of the *hijab* ‘to appear to honour their parents’ but again in contrast to my respondents believes that what the women are really doing is creating a chance for them to choose their own way in life.

Therefore it can be seen that education is playing an important part in the lives of these Muslim women and in the decisions that they are making whether to put on the *hijab*. It appears from my evidence that it is now easier to wear the *hijab* in schools in Britain and the *hijab* is being worn by many women at a younger age. Those women who are coming to the wearing of the *hijab* at a later age are educating themselves as to why the *hijab* is worn and are making the interpretations of the literature themselves. Linked with the theme of education, but not voiced by my interviewees, Bullock (2003, p.48) summarises how one of her participants had a daughter who
covered and was worried that her daughter ‘would not be taken seriously in her profession by other people’. Her daughter was about to start ‘medical school’ and as such her parents thought that by covering and wearing the *hijab*, she may not be seen as ‘a leader in her field’.

6.4. Family and friends

There was a desire to show that the wearing of the *hijab* was a choice made by the women themselves without any other influences. The women interviewed were articulate and the majority did not express that they had been submitted to any kind of pressure, including the forced wearing of the *hijab*, although some were possibly unaware that they were susceptible to outside pressures. There may have been some pressure to conform that was not discussed by the women as they may have been sub-conscious pressures with which the women were faced. It became clear throughout the research that friends and family were an increasingly important influence on the wearing of the *hijab*. Twenty-eight out of the forty-two women made references to their family including their husbands having an opinion on whether the *hijab* should be worn or not. There was plenty of positive encouragement among the women, and from their parents.

According to Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) although it was her choice to put on the *hijab* she admitted that it was her father’s positive response to her friend wearing the *hijab* that had prompted her to put it on: *My trigger was a friend wearing the headscarf properly. My father commented on how nice it looked and it made me think about doing it.* Miss AK (long-term wearer, under 25) expressed how her mother already wore the *hijab* and: *I was influenced by her.* Silvestri (2009, p.15) notes how there are a number of Muslim women ‘who are following their friends’, and Contractor (2012, p.86) reiterates this in her findings that some Muslim women she spoke to were wearing the *hijab* because they ‘admired older siblings or other relatives wore it’.

It was clear from some of the responses from the interviewees that there was a dialogue between the women and their parents. The previous examples show that these women obviously had a good relationship with their parents and were eager to follow their ideals and the examples set by them. There was also evidence from other
interviewees who believed that the women who chose to wear or not wear the hijab were following the examples set down for them by their mothers and other members of the family. Mrs AB (long-term wearer, 25-39) clearly explained: *Now girls are wearing them to copy their mothers.* Mrs DA (past wearer, 25-39) described: *My family don't wear the scarf either* and proclaimed that in her opinion: *Some wear the (Islamic) dress because father says or mother did.* Silvestri (2009, p.10) also found evidence that ‘initially their parents’ were the women’s influence when it came to the transmission of the faith.

In opposition to this idea and proof that this is not always the case is Miss AJ (long-term wearer, under 25) who testified: *My sisters and mother don't wear it,* so she had made the decision to wear the hijab despite her sister and her mother not wearing it. However, there must have been a degree of religious input and influence in her life as she had been fasting during Ramadan from a young age and it was at this point that she had made the decision to keep the hijab on once Ramadan had finished. Silvestri (2009, p.16) found that the younger generation of Muslims she interviewed ‘resort to Islam’ and ‘study, practice and interpret more critically than their mothers’ and this often includes the wearing of hijab. Miss EK (non-wearer, under 25) also made reference to her mother and understood the wearing of the hijab as something you did when you were much older. When talking about the hijab she asserted: *My mother has just put it on in her fifties; this is normal.*

There was also found to be a cultural element to the wearing of Islamic dress for a number of women. They spoke of wearing the dupatta as a teenager in Britain and how they often disliked wearing it. As noted in chapter five this type of head covering appeared to be worn under duress, but when the women were older the decision to not wear a head covering or to put on the fixed hijab became their choice. Werbner (2007, p.172) as noted in the literature review also makes reference to the wearing of the dupatta as ‘embedded in and embodies the female code of honour’ but questions whether the same idea is attributed to the wearing of the hijab. Mrs EI (non-wearer, 40+) who used to wear the cultural dress, the shalwar kameez and dupatta when living in Pakistan explained: *My mother showed me how to cover* and carried on to add: *When my Father used to visit my home, I would wear it.* Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) was in agreement: *I did get pressure from parents to wear the scarf. It didn't*
matter if it was see through and falling off my head. Miss EH (non-wearer, 25-39) claimed: *I know that a lot of teenagers don't want to wear it, but are made to. I think that culture has a lot to do with it.*

Dwyer (1999, p.17) discovered that the pupils she interviewed were ‘challenging parental ideas about what was appropriate attire’ as some had expressed that parents sometimes ‘mix up religion and culture’ and the young women were creating ‘an alternative ‘hybrid’ identity’ which often included the wearing of the *hijab*. One of the pupils explicitly expressed how her *hijab* was the outward show of being a Muslim, but alongside this you had ‘to feel the *hijab* inside’. She continued to explain how as part of your ‘Pakistani culture’ you were expected to show yourself off, but Islam required that you dress ‘in the simplest way as possible’, thus creating a tension between religion and culture.

Mrs AI (long-term wearer, 25-39) made a conscious decision to put on the *hijab* to please her family for cultural reasons: *I started to wear it when I was fifteen years old. It is cultural - just for sake of my family.* Mrs AI appeared to be quite happy wearing the *hijab* and did not voice the need to question what she was doing. She knew it is also worn for religious belief and had read it in the Qur’an. Contractor (2012, p.86) and Bullock (2003, p.43) explain that some of their participants, just like mine, had grown up with the idea that the *hijab* should be worn, and describe how the women felt that it was something that they should do. In their research Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.410) also found evidence of women wearing the veil because they wanted ‘to feel tied to their culture’ and they wanted to ‘shore up their cultural identity’. This they found was particularly the case among those women who had moved to the U.S.A. from other countries.

Other women interviewed also referred to their parents when talking about the wearing of the *hijab*. Miss CB (occasional wearer, under 25) had also put on the *hijab* to please the family: *About thirteen when I first wore *hijab*, as my mother's family are quite religious*. However, she continued to explain that she had recently taken it off to decide for herself if she wanted to wear the *hijab* or not: *You can't wear it because someone asks you to do it.* She concluded by saying: *When I put it back on it will be for good and will be between me and God.*
During the interviews it also became clear that some of the respondents although openly instructed to wear the hijab were happy to do so. Miss BF (new wearer, under 25) had direct influence from her parents and put on the hijab: *When I left college I started to wear it, my parents said I should.* Contractor (2012, p.86) discovered in her research that some Muslim women use the hijab ‘as a tool to demand Islamic rights that may be denied to them for cultural reasons’. During my research Islamic rights were not expressed, although the interviewees were keen to show that the wearing of the hijab was their choice, and as a useful side effect gave them the freedom to do as they pleased. Mrs EJ (non-wearer, 40+) observed: *The hijab does differentiate between men and women. It does empower women, if cover you are free from families to go out.* Anwar and Shah (2000, p.218) noted in their research that women were putting on the hijab in later life which in their opinion ‘gave them more freedom’. Bullock (2003, p.61) found that the wearing of the hijab for some women gave them a sense of freedom and they felt that they could ‘cross gender boundaries’ when the hijab was worn. They also expressed the view that they were freer to leave the home and go about their business when the hijab was worn as ‘the attention that they might draw to oneself had been removed’. Bullock (2003, p.62) explains how the women can wear what they want to at home, and because the hijab is only worn when the women go outside it gives them the freedom to ‘interact with society’. The women disputed the fact that some ‘interpreters of the Qur’an and Sunnah’ believed that should stay at home and Bullock’s (2003, p.63) respondents referred to women who ‘played an active part in the community’ at the time of Muhammad including his wife.

Husbands were mentioned by some of the women as an influence on whether they wore the hijab or not, but these references tended to explain that it was not up to the husband what the wife chose to wear. Anwar and Shah (2000, p.226) also talk of some of their respondents putting on the hijab once they are married without the permission of their husbands and Bullock (2003, p.47) cites evidence of a Muslim women who initially started to wear the hijab ‘to please her husband’ but continues to explain that this was her choice and ‘there was no coercion on her husband’s part’.
Mrs AC (long-term wearer, 25-39) emphasised: No one else says to wear it, not husband, it’s part of the religion. Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) was in agreement: My husband is fine. I don’t wear it in front of him anyway. Mrs DC (past wearer, 25-39) had the view: If I’m with my husband I would wear it as a sign of respect. My husband doesn’t mind if I don’t wear it. Mrs DC expanded further that it was in fact her marriage that had given her the freedom to make her own choice with regard to covering her head. She often wore a: shalwar kameez with a long scarf and still does if she is out in the community, but with regard to wearing the fixed hijab she affirmed: I got married and was given the freedom not to wear it. Bullock (2003, p.46) not only found evidence of husbands not encouraging their wives to put on the hijab, but found that the husband of one of her participants, even though a Muslim himself, disapproved so much of her putting on the hijab that ‘she could not wear it in his presence’. Bullock (2003, p.47) also cites a second example of a husband not approving of the wearing of the hijab and explains how ‘her husband had prevented her’ from wearing it and according to Bullock (2003, p.48) this ‘is the inverse of the stereotypical view of men forcing their wives to cover’.

There was also evidence that fathers were not all influencing their daughters to put on the hijab, but who had actively discouraged the wearing of the hijab and were sometimes the reason why the women were not putting it on. One non-wearer, Miss EK, (non-wearer, under 25) was very specific about this and recited a story about her father’s views on the hijab and the advice he had given her as a teenager on the brink of putting on the hijab. This advice had stayed with her and she cited this as the main reason why she had not put on the hijab and probably never would. Here she was being given advice by her father not to wear it, which is in total contrast to the perceived idea of Muslim women being forced to wear the hijab. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) claimed: Aged seven until ten or eleven, I lived with Dad and he said not to wear it. Miss EH (non-wearer, 25-39) reiterated this: My Dad said head covers don’t mean anything.

Contractor (2012, p.86) also found that some of her participants felt that the hijab was not needed to be worn by their ‘Western educated daughters’. Agreeing with this is Afshar (2008, p.421) who as stated in the literature review found evidence of women who are wearing the hijab when their parents and in particular their ‘dad’ would
rather that they did not wear it. However, the evidence from Afshar (2008) differs from my research as according to Afshar (2008, p.421) this request not to wear the hijab is to avoid ‘all the hassle’ not because the parents do not think that it is important, and in her examples the women are clearly making their own choices to wear it regardless of the views of their parents.

Afshar (2008, p.424) also states that conversion did not mean a ‘rejection of home and hearth and kinship relations’ and thought that the hijab was ‘not one that alienates them from their kin and communities’. Evidence was found in this research that reiterates that point of view and Miss BJ (new wearer, 40+) mentioned: My family saw it coming, so wasn’t much of a shock. I mixed with Muslims, so I didn’t have non-Muslim friends at time. However, in contrast to the findings of Afshar (2008, p.424) some of the converts interviewed for this research were at odds with their parents for wearing the hijab. Mrs BL (new wearer, 25-39) in particular was asked not to wear it when she visited: My Mum asked me not to wear it when I visit. There was also evidence from another convert who had become estranged from her family due to her conversion. Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) said: It is very hard for my family, and I don't see them that often. They are not comfortable, and don't want to be seen out with me. Bullock (2003, p.69) explains how ‘some converts have serious difficulties with their families, friends, and colleagues’ when they become Muslim and put on the hijab. She too found evidence of women who had negative comments and pressure from their families not to wear it and Bullock (2003, p.71) believes that these women have a ‘dual battle’ against their families who should be giving the women their support and the wider society.

Therefore, from the evidence from this research it does appear that conversion can mean a separation between the Muslim woman and her non-Muslim family who do not approve of her conversion. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.406) also found evidence of ‘friction with family members’ although the conflict they found was between members of the same family, one of whom wore the hijab and one who had discarded it and felt that the other family member should too.
There was a belief among some of the non-wearing interviewees that the women were pressured by their families to conform to the way that their parents wanted them to dress, although the research showed that by wearing the fixed hijab the majority of the women felt that they had made an informed choice of their own and the interviewees’ comments on pressure to wear the hijab tended to be isolated and unusual examples that occurred infrequently throughout the meetings. Contractor (2012, p.90) in contrast to my research questioned her participants about the hijab being oppressive and a form of ‘male dominance’ but received the response that when it was ‘worn by choice’ it ‘was a symbol of their self-determination, independence and agency’. However, Contractor (2012, p.91) like my research also found that in relation to choice, those participants who wore the hijab felt that they were still wearing what they wanted to and that they ‘reiterated that choice was critical in such discourses’. Dwyer (1999, p.13) also found that her participants when talking about clothing ‘emphasised that they made their own choices and were not constrained by others’. Silvestri (2009, p. 10) identifies how Islam in the opinion of her respondents was ‘a very free choice and all-encompassing experience’ and they were given the choice whether to follow the ‘Islamic principles and practices’ or not. According to Silvestri (2009, p.14) the wearing of the hijab is one way that ‘Muslim women exert their free choice and stand up for and articulate their own human rights within a secular context’.

Standing out from the other interviewees, Mrs CA (occasional wearer, 40+) during her interview made it clear that her conversion was not complete, and she spoke of wearing the hijab due to outside persuasion. She did not express the same feelings of belonging to Islam in the same way that the other converts did. From the statements she made during her interview it was very clear that she hated wearing the hijab: I was pushed to wear it by my husband. I hate wearing it, I’m not allowed to go swimming, or mix. In fact Mrs CA was the only interviewee who openly expressed the view that she did not like wearing the hijab. Her views and actions appeared to go against all of the views of the other women spoken to, whose assurance that the wearing of the hijab was their own decision that they had come to through knowledge and understanding of the religious texts. Mrs CA explained that: I have read it and I feel guilty for not wearing it, and tries to find excuses not to put on the hijab. She explained that her conversion to Islam and the wearing of the hijab had not been easy.
Bullock (2003, p.51) asked her participants if there were any disadvantages to wearing the *hijab* and also received answers such as ‘being hot in summer, the lack of opportunity to exercise, since Canada’s facilities are mixed sex’, although Bullock (2003, p.52) continues to explain that for her participants ‘the advantages’ gained from the wearing of *hijab* ‘outweighed any disadvantages’.

As a white woman from a predominantly white estate Mrs CA found that she lost her non-Muslim friends and family when she put on the *hijab* and then when she took it off again the Muslim community that she now lived amongst did not approve. Her conversion came since marriage to a Muslim man of Libyan origin and she seemed to live in fear of his extremist views. He was clearly a very strict Muslim and believed that his wife should read the Qur’an and be a practising Muslim too: *My Husband thinks that I should put it on and start reading the Qur’an again.*

Although the majority of the interviewees did not feel pressured into wearing the *hijab*, wanting to be like their friends was a factor that was playing a role in their lives. Particularly prominent in the group of younger women was a desire to be like their friends and it was mentioned by some of the interviewees that their friends had started to wear the *hijab* and then so had they. Contractor (2012) also notes how there is evidence to back this up as she knew women who wore it ‘to be ‘cool’ among their peers’ (Contractor 2012, p.86, italics in original). Bullock (2003, p.42) records how one of her interviewees had been ‘influenced by some older girls at the mosque’ who she had seen wearing the *hijab* and describes how the participant had ‘great respect for their modest dress and behaviour’. Read and Bartkowski (2000, p.403) remark in their findings, that some of the Muslim women that they interviewed, were putting on the veil, as they call it, ‘because they had friends who did’. They also state that the wearing of the veil was important to ‘friendship networks’ because women who live in non-Muslim countries can identify other Muslim women among whom they live and can feel a connection with them. Miss AK (long-term wearer, under 25) responded: *I started off because I had a couple of friends wearing it.* Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) affirmed: *I have a lot of Muslim friends, so to wear the scarf is normal.* Miss AH (long-term wearer, under 25) who had already put on the *hijab*, took her Islamic dress to another level due to the direct influence of her friends. She explained: *My friends used to wear jilbab, so I put it on.*
It could be seen that information regarding the wearing of the *hijab* was shared amongst friends. As already mentioned Miss BE, (new wearer, under 25) had put on the *hijab* due to her friends and father’s comments. When talking about the *hijab* she offered: *You can find it in books and from friends and from the internet.* Mrs BB (new wearer, 25-39) observed: *I learn about Islam from friends and research it myself.* Observing what was happening around her in the community in which she lived and worked Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) declaimed: *My sister wears one and a lot of friends around me have started to wear one.*

Some wearers were not only listening to friends and family, but were educating the older generations into the reasons behind wearing the *hijab*. Many of the older generations had discarded their *hijab*, whereas the middle age group were re-educating themselves and putting on the *hijab*, as their mothers had not had the influence on them. The younger women were watching their mothers and friends who had already made the decision to wear it and were following their example. Mrs BM (new wearer, 25-39) explained: *Children are now influencing their older parents.* Bullock (2003, p.43) also reports how there was testimony from some of her interviewees that grandmothers and mothers were starting to put on the *hijab* and explains how one grandmother had decided to put on the *hijab* at the age of sixty-five. Silvestri (2009, p.15) also notes how the younger generations who she spoke to were holding ‘Quranic study groups for adults’. This phenomenon of the young influencing the old is also noted by Khan (2007, p.203) who explains how the women seen wearing the *hijab* and identified as part of his research are ‘young Muslim women born and reared in the United States’. Khan (2007, p.204, italics in original) also relates this to Muslims in France where it is the younger generation who are asserting their ‘Islamic heritage’ and states that ‘family dynamics may play a crucial role in issues of conformity or comfort in wearing the *hijab*’.

Looking at the evidence from my research it can be seen that family and friends are clearly an important influence on the desire to wear or not wear the *hijab*. Some of the interviewees were listening to what their parents and friends were saying on the topic and were then making their decisions based on their ideas.
6.5. Clothing industry/fashion

This resurgence in the wearing of the *hijab* by many British Muslims is not just about wearing the cultural head coverings that come from differing areas of the world, it is not about going back to traditional dress, or as some women described, the hated *dupatta* that was worn as a child. This modern form of head covering is fixed and permanent, not only showing an adherence to the religion of Islam, but is a reworking of the wearing of the scarf that is defining their image as a Muslim woman. Dwyer (1999, p.9) also identifies how Muslim women were expressing their religious identity through ‘new dress styles’, and notes how this means ‘the wearing of a more complete headcovering (the *hijab*), rather than the loosely worn headscarf (*dupatta*)’. The *hijab* was described by most of my interviewees as being worn because it was a religious obligation, however, it was also found in many cases to be a fashion statement.

The Muslim women interviewed for this research whether they wore the *hijab* or not were not immune to the influence of fashion. The desire to be fashionable and wear the latest *hijab* and *jilbab* was expressed by some of the wearers, and even wearing a fashionable style of *burqa* was mentioned. From a non-Muslim observer’s point of view this would not usually be considered an aspect associated with the wearing of Islamic dress and *hijab*, but fashion occurred in the responses of the women a number of times. Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.138) have also noted this ‘upsurge in Islamic fashion’ in Britain and state that this results in ‘a variety of hybrid styles that blend concerns with religion, modesty, politics, and identity’. Moors (2007, p.321) in her research with women in Yemen, a very different cultural setting to my research, also notes how fashion is influencing the Islamic dress of the women there. Moors (2007, p.321) notes that it is not just ‘modernist women’ that are ‘engaged in wearing fashionable outerwear’, but women of an Islamist position who ‘find it hard to avoid fashion altogether’.

Miss SB2 (new wearer, under 25) when talking about her *burqa* explained: *When I go out I have to wear the burqa, I’ve taken mine off it’s in my room. A long dress, ankles to wrists, quite flared, done in different designs, they make it fashionable*. Mrs BD (new wearer, 25 – 39) who had chosen to wear her *hijab* in a certain style due to a
burns injury, was now conscious of the fact that within the community in which she lives the style of her scarf is now fashionable: *I used to leave my neck bare, until oil splashed on me. I started to cover my neck and now it is the fashion to wear it.* Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) commented: *My jilbabs I buy or have them made and you can get them in Muslim bookshops. I shop everywhere to find jilbabs in the style I like.* Miss AA1 (long-term wearer, 25-39) was conscious of the fact that: *Hijabs can be different colours and different prices. You can also get them in designer labels.*

The wearers of the *hijab* interviewed for this research were conscious of the styles that they were wearing and the image that they were portraying to other members of the Muslim communities. The need for this type of dress to be fashionable was at the forefront of the minds of many of these outwardly religious Muslims. Even though the main priority in wearing the *hijab* was to fulfil a religious duty, modernity was playing a part in the style and colour of scarf that was fulfilling the function of the *hijab* and it still mattered to these women what colour, type and style of scarf they were wearing. Those who wore the *hijab* did not want to be seen as old fashioned and there was evidence from some of the past wearers and non-wearers who thought that the *hijab* was old fashioned and as they wanted to be seen as modern they had decided not to wear it. Therefore it can be established from the responses that if the traditional form of headscarf was the only style on offer some would not have worn it, and the fact that there were fashionable styles available encouraged the wearing of the *hijab*. Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) was in the process of reviewing her ideas on the *hijab*: *I used to think wearing hijab was an old fashioned thing. I am noticing that you can wear the hijab with modern clothes and look elegant. Many friends are wearing jeans and dresses with the hijab. They are not repressed or held back, it is their choice.* However, she was not in the process of changing to wear the *hijab* and went on to describe her own attire as: *A very modern trouser suit. Not too tight, but showing a bit of my figure.* Moors (2007, p.326) reports that among women in the Yemen, there became a fashion for wearing a thinner outer garment that ‘had a more distinctly elegant and feminine look, but Moors (2007, p.327) explains that this has now evolved and although only touched upon by this respondent in my research, Moors (2007, p.327) reports of a ‘dangerous phenomenon’ that is occurring in the Yemen,
where women are covering their heads but are wearing outer garments that ‘follows
the body and shows the chest and the shape of the body’.

Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) often wore a fusion of Eastern and Western clothing and
this idea was also found amongst Muslim women who were interviewed by the
journalist Barton (2002) who found that an important part of wearing the hijab for
these women was that it matched their outfit. The concept of not wanting to appear
old fashioned was mentioned by a past wearer who wanted to be seen as modern.

Mrs DB (past wearer, 40+) explained: *I work in a Muslim school so I respect the
dress code. I also like to be modern.*

Dwyer (1999, p.11) in contrast found that the school children she interviewed
expressed their views of clothing as ‘‘Asian’/ ‘English’’ with the Asian clothes
representing ‘‘tradition’ and ‘ethnic culture’’ and the English clothes representing
‘‘Westernisation’ and ‘modernity’’. The pupils interviewed by Dwyer (1999, p.11)
expressed the view that ‘‘English clothes’ signify rebelliousness and active sexuality
and threaten religious or ethnic ‘purity’. Dwyer (1999, p.21) also explains how her
participants had ‘experimented with make-up’ and tried different ways of ‘tying their
newly worn headscarves’ and believed that school was a safe place where this
experimentation could take place.

The idea of the *hijab* being ‘a symbol of poverty, backwardness and ugliness is
explored by Bullock (2003, p.43) when she looks at the wearing of the *hijab* being
associated with the class of a person. This idea was not mentioned by my
interviewees, but for one of Bullock’s (2003) interviewees who grew up in ‘the
Middle-East during the last years of European occupation’, it was those from a ‘high
social status’ that did not wear the *hijab* and it was those who were ‘the poor people
who worked for those’ who wore the *hijab* and as such this association with class had
prevented this woman from putting on the *hijab*. Dwyer (1999, p.12) also records that
for some of her interviewees the wearing of ‘‘Asian’ clothes is associated with
backwardness, with being ‘in the dark ages’’ and also minutes how the wearing of
different types of dress were class signifiers for the girls at the different schools.

Silvestri (2009, p.12) found that the women often criticised those who are ‘trapped in
old-fashioned culturalist traditions and refuse to integrate’ although Silvestri (2009,
p.13) also describes how her participants felt that the *hijab* was ‘not an assertion of a ‘primitive and backward’ belief about female subjugation’ and from the responses from my research and Silvestri’s (2009, p.14) Europe cannot be ‘divided into a feminist/modern and a conservative/backward camp’. For both sets of participants the *hijab* was seen by many as being a modern way of dressing.

Even at the time of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad the women in the Middle East were conscious of the fashion trends particularly with regards to veiling. They knew that to be seen in a particular way, they had to make careful choices in the way that they dressed. They were also very aware of portraying their Muslim identity to others. The more women that are wearing the *hijab*, since 9/11, the more other women are seeing them wearing it and are taking part in a cultural shift in Britain with the way that they are dressing. Just like belonging to a special club, these women are joining with other Muslim women by donning the *hijab* and becoming part of an outwardly Muslim religious group. The clothes and styles that they could see other women wearing had an influence either consciously or sub-consciously on the way that the interviewees dressed.

A connection clearly emerges from this research between the wearing of the *hijab* and being fashionable. There is a desire to fulfil what the wearers see as their religious duty, but to do it in a modern way that is in keeping with the modern lifestyles that many experience living in Britain. Dwyer (1999, p.14) also identifies how ‘young British South Asian Muslim women are involved in creating their own styles’ and sees this as a pointer that ‘cultural mixing’ is indeed taking place. Since 9/11 and the exposure that Islam has received in the press the women interviewed are seeing what other Muslim women are wearing and are themselves wanting to keep up with the latest styles. They were very clear that what they are wearing is their own choice.

There was a definite split between those women who embraced the wearing of the *hijab* and saw it as modern and liberating and those women who did not wear it and saw it as old fashioned and belonging to an ancient time that was not relevant in today’s society. In her examination of the wearing of the *hijab*, as stated in the literature review, Lewis (2007, p.436), citing Leshkowich and Jones (2003) explains
how women who wear the \textit{hijab} ‘as habit’ could find themselves to be seen as unfashionable and this could in turn lead to a divide between some Muslim women.

Many of the interviewees were conscious of Islamic styles and fashion and saw this as preferable to the wearing of Western fashion. As noted in the literature review Eicher and Sumberg (1995, p.300) discuss the idea that wearing certain clothing can identify you with a certain group and discuss the idea of ‘Ethnic dress being the opposite of world fashion’ stating that women often wear this to ignore fashion. Many of the women interviewed who adopted the \textit{hijab} found it a liberating and confidence-building experience where they could be free from what they saw as the trappings of Western fashion. Whereas before putting on the \textit{hijab} they may have worried about being too fat or too thin, too short or too tall, not wearing enough make up, not being in fashion, or having their hair done in the latest style, they could now put on their outer garments and be free from that way of life. Bullock (2003, p.72) talks of the idea of the wearing of the \textit{hijab} being a ‘liberating experience’ and explains how this idea could have come from ‘the feminist critique of the commodification of women’s body in capitalist society’ and as a result of the \textit{hijab} being worn, ‘a woman is not judged by her external appearance’. For my interviewees the following of religious rules meant that these women believed that they had no choice in what to wear and that the need to follow Western fashion had been removed from their lives. Mrs BD (new wearer, 25-39) confessed: \textit{It has improved my confidence. I don’t need to follow fashion.} Bullock (2003, p.72) also discovered that one of her interviewees felt that she gained ‘inner peace and greater self-respect’ when she was wearing the \textit{hijab} ‘because she was not concentrating on her beauty and fashions’.

Contractor (2012, p.90) also noted how the wearing of the \textit{hijab} ‘takes away the ‘pressure to look good’ and identifies that for many non-Muslim women there is a tremendous pressure to dress in a certain way and have perfect ‘physical appearances’. For some of my interviewees, Islamic dress had a wider significance as a useful covering rather than just being a religious obligation. Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) described: \textit{I always wear my coat because I think I am fat and need to cover up. I don’t keep it on all the time for religious reasons.} Thus the Islamic precept coincides with how the women want to feel about themselves. They are using the sanctuary of the \textit{hijab} as a haven and a retreat and as such the \textit{hijab} is helping with the
confidence of this particular Muslim woman. Mrs BF (new wearer, 25-39) also used her Islamic dress as a sanctuary when pregnant: *A friend of my husband used to visit, and didn't know I was pregnant because I covered, he couldn't tell that I was pregnant. I joked at first that it was the neighbour's. Nobody in the street knew that I was pregnant either.*

With the donning of the *hijab* some of the women believed that they were liberated from the ideals of Western fashion, but as a consequence became aware of the type and length of scarf they should be seen to be wearing. For example some of the women interviewed for this research had been observing what other Muslim women were wearing and expressed the idea that the correct type of scarf had to be worn to be fashionable. They were conscious of the trend for wearing designer scarves and they also told of how it was the way in which the scarf was tied that had implications for how fashionable you were. This trend for wearing designer scarves was mentioned by Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) who admitted: *I am wearing trousers, a shirt, a zipped up jacket and a Calvin Klein headscarf. You can buy these from Asian shops, but they are out of fashion at the moment.* Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) verbalised: *I used to wear it in a way that made me look really old. I try to wear it in a more modern way.* Bullock (2003, p.51) found that the women were released from the wearing of Western fashion, but unlike my interviewees there was a feeling from at least one of her participants that ‘not being able to wear makeup’ was a disadvantage of the wearing of the *hijab*.

This increased interest in the wearing of the latest fashion of the *hijab* and Islamic dress has also opened up avenues for increased sales by retailers. Internet sites such as ‘Hijab al-Muminat’ as mentioned by Akou (2007, p.412) sell these products and Muslim lifestyles magazines advertising Islamic dress have made use of this desire to purchase modern forms of the *hijab*. The websites selling the *hijab* and the fashion magazines, according to the women interviewed influenced the style of the *hijab* purchased and the latest fashion was an important factor in the choices made. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) emphasised: *There are lots of different styles this is an old style. You can find out about this in magazines, or buy them at Muslim bookshops.*
As mentioned by Miss AG, Muslim women who wear the *hijab* have no difficulty finding out what is fashionable and what is not through various mediums such as female magazines and websites dedicated to the selling of the *hijab* online. These providers expose the women to what are considered by the fashion elite to be the look of that particular season. Since 9/11 there has been an increase in the sales of this type of clothing, and as noted in the literature review, magazines such as *Emel: The Muslim Lifestyle Magazine* can now be found on the shelves of high street newsagents, whereas previously magazines of this nature had to be sought out. Akou (2007, p.404) also states that due to the use of the internet all Muslim women are now able to purchase Islamic clothing and are not limited to the clothes available on the high street. Thus the concept of looking good and being modern is infiltrating all walks of life and it does not appear that any country is able to completely ignore the desires of the women and the fashion industry. Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.133) note that in some form, ‘Muslim women are engaged with fashion’ although this could be rejecting it, changing what they already wear or ‘participating in the development of new fashion trends’. Moors and Tarlo (2007, p.134) suggest that to a certain extent the types of dress that Muslim women wear can be ‘geographically plotted’, but note how women in places such as London have access to a variety of styles of Islamic dress and can ‘create cosmopolitan wardrobes’.

Hair was an issue that was touched upon by many of the wearers of the *hijab* and there seemed to be two important issues connected to this topic. Firstly, the *hijab* was seen as useful by the women and could be used to cover hair that was not going to be shown to the public. Secondly, the *hijab* was seen by many members of the public as covering bad hair a concept that the women were not comfortable with. The women who voiced this wanted to make it clear that they did not have bad hair and that they were wearing the *hijab* because of their belief in Islam.

Therefore the *hijab* is worn for religious reasons; which the women have discovered for themselves; the wearing of it is influenced by family and friends; but it can also be a fashion statement.
6.6. 9/11

As noted in the previous chapter, 9/11 was seen by many of the interviewees as a trigger that had encouraged Muslim women to be identified with their religion and as a result had encouraged women to put on the *hijab*. Although the respondents had not made significant changes to their own dress because of 9/11 they were aware of other women who had. They believed that 9/11 has had an impact on the wearing of the *hijab* on some Muslims in Britain who may or may not have considered the wearing of the *hijab* previous to this event. 9/11 and subsequent events including the War on Terror prompted an outcry from a large section of the British population, who by marching through the streets of London, gave a message to the Government that they did not want to be involved in this War. The involvement of Muslims in these demonstrations and the pressure placed on the Muslim communities of Britain resulted in some women reacting to this, by putting on the *hijab* and making a stand for the religion of Islam. Miss AD (long-term wearer, under 25) explained that within her community and in society as a whole: *I have seen more and more people wearing it and putting it on to show that they are Muslim.* Haddad (2007, p.254) also found in her research that some of the women she interviewed had put on the *hijab* to show that they were followers of Islam.

As already mentioned in the literature review Khan (2007) interviewed Muslim women in the U.S.A. who had put on the *hijab* after 9/11, and Khan (2007, p.195) concurs that they were also putting on the *hijab* to express ‘their own identity’ and ‘create a space for themselves in the public arena’. However he continues to explain that in the U.S.A the putting on of the *hijab* is not always religiously motivated which is in contrast to my findings where all of the women stated that the *hijab* was worn for religious reasons. Khan (2007, p.207) explains how Muslim women in the U.S.A are in continually ‘reconciling their Islamic beliefs with their American culture’ and for the women he interviewed he found that there was ‘no conflict between religion and society’ and they were wearing the *hijab* as part of ‘American societal milieu that encourages personal choice’. Khan (2007, p.208) also concludes in contrast to my research that Muslim women putting on the *hijab* in the U.S.A ‘to test the parameters of America’s stated tolerance and pluralism’.

208
A number of those interviewed were aware of the fact that once you put on the *hijab* you stand out as a Muslim woman and many of the wearers expressed the feeling that suddenly they were being seen in a different way since 9/11 and had become the focus of attention wherever they were. Mrs BG (new wearer, 40+) elected: *The day after 9/11, I was looked at by people as if it was the first time they had seen me. Wherever I go, I’m looked at in a different way; I would never go to US now.*

There was evidence that the women felt that 9/11 had put the women who wear the *hijab* under a spotlight, they felt a responsibility to be seen as good Muslims and justify the fact that not all Muslims are terrorists. Davies and Darr (2003, p.151) agree with this and believe that many women are modern examples showing that it is good to be a Muslim. Those respondents from my research who already wore the *hijab* were aware of the fact that by standing out as a Muslim and wearing the *hijab* they had to make sure that they were behaving in an appropriate manner. Haddad (2007, p.264) also notes how Muslim women are the ones who are ‘altering public prejudice against Islam and Muslims’. Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) expressed the view: *It makes me feel more responsible for my actions, because wearing the scarf I have to think twice, about what would people think about Muslims.* Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) held the opinion that: *The more people that wear Islamic dress gives a better view of Islam. Sometimes I am defensive, and conscious of my behaviour when out.* Mirroring this view, Contractor (2012, p.88) also notes among her participants the belief that once you are identifiable as a Muslim through the wearing of the *hijab*, then you have to behave in a certain way when you are out in public and ‘try to be ‘good’ representatives’ of the religion. Contractor (2012, p.85) explains that within her participants there was also voiced the ‘stereotypical opinion in some Muslim communities’ that there was an expectation about how a woman wearing the *hijab* ‘must behave in society’. According to Contractor (2012, p.85) the expectation was that the woman must be ‘of a certain demeanour; she must be quiet, not laugh, stay at home and perhaps not even have fun’, but explains that ‘this has no basis whatsoever in foundational religious texts’. Dwyer (1999, p.7) citing Brah and Minhas (1985) notes how school uniforms were often associated with ‘noisy self-expression’ whereas the shalwar kameez was associated with ‘more subdued forms of behaviour’. Silvestri (2009, p.12) notes how her participants felt that the wearing of the *hijab* ‘often serves as an inspiration to better citizens and responsible parents’. Not
identified in my research Silvestri (2009, p.14) also explains how her participants saw it ‘as a strategy for marriage’ as her participants felt that by wearing the *hijab* they were expressing their ‘modern individualism and independence’ but they were also showing the ‘traditional image of feminine piety, modesty, and motherhood’.

Nearly all of the women interviewed, irrespective of their dress, said that their faith and their belief in Islam were now deeper due to the events of 9/11. They spoke of an awareness that they now had of their religion, an identification that they now felt with Islam and a desire to find out more. These responses were often linked with the theme of researching and learning about the religion. Mrs BJ (new wearer, 40+) responded: *For every action there is a reaction. People want to learn more to become better people.* Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) declaimed: *I was already studying, so it made me want to learn more.* Mrs BD (new wearer, 25-39) emphasised: *It has made me go back to my religion, to see where the concepts come from. In many ways it has helped me look into my religion.* Miss EG (non-wearer, under 25) concurred: *It has made me think how others perceive the religion. It has made me feel an identification with my religion.*

Also, some Muslims who had never thought about wearing the *hijab*, as explored previously, were now reading up on the religion that they were born into. Mrs BK (new wearer, under 25) revealed: *Since 9/11 there is more in the media about Islam. There is more interest in the religion and not always in a negative way.* Mrs EA (non-wearer, 25-39) mentioned that due to the increased media attention: *People have started reading up on it and realise they should be wearing it, because Islam is so strong at the moment.*

When it came to the idea of the media coverage the women were very clear in their opinions about this. Miss AK (long-term wearer, under 25) described: *There is so much media portrayal, so much to believe and think about. It has made me think more about my religion.* Miss EK (non-wearer, under 25) recounted: *The media is trying to portray Islam in the wrong way. Showing the bad side, about women, etc. Using the word Shariah, which just means the law.*
Many of the women had been motivated by the events of 9/11 and the media coverage post 9/11 to go and uncover the facts about their religion and to seek out the literature written about Islam. In his research as noted Khan (2007, p.206) agrees that ‘It is women’s own ruminations’ that come into play when they are deciding whether to wear the *hijab* or not. Mrs AL (long-term wearer, 25-39) felt: *Religion doesn’t change, interpretations do. People’s views of the religion have changed drastically. People went out and found out about the religion.* Miss AG (long-term wearer, under 25) answered: *I am studying Islam at the moment, so it has had a big impact on my religion.* Miss AJ (long-term wearer, under 25) verbalised: *I have started to research my religion.*

In contrast to those women putting on the *hijab* to become more visible as Muslims, events such as 9/11 and the Iraq War had led to subtle changes to the dress of some of the Muslim women who by using a negotiation process had avoided showing their Muslim identity in public and had avoided standing out as followers of Islam. The motivating factor behind these changes was the fear of being attacked or persecuted. Haddad (2007, p262) as stated in the literature review also noted these changes with some of her respondents in the U.S.A, but in contrast these women were taking off the veil, as she refers to it, to avoid persecution. Some of the interviewees for this research were very scared after 9/11 and as the newspapers reported that women were being attacked around the country there was an underlying current of fear in the few weeks following the bombings. According to Afshar (2008, p.420) it is the women who cover that are being focused on since the terrorist attacks and it is often these women who are seen as being forced to wear the *hijab*. There was evidence that a couple of the women felt that they were now perceived as terrorists and fundamentalists and another thought that she was nearly run over on a zebra crossing because she was a Muslim. Amongst this group of respondents one woman had chosen to wear lighter colours for a short period of time and one of the interviewees who was very scared after 9/11, had chosen to wear a wool hat to blend in as it was winter to disguise her Muslim identity for fear of being attacked. Mrs BA (new wearer, 25-39) was conscious of the fact that: *I couldn’t be recognised as a Muslim, all winter.*
Although some evidence of hostility was uncovered, this kind of behaviour was almost expected from amongst the more racist members of British society and the reports of this nature, showed that there was always a low level degree of unpleasantness towards the women for being different, even before 9/11. However, the hijab was not always removed, but was camouflaged by some of the interviewees so as not to be obvious as Muslims on the streets of Britain. The niqab was also removed by some to blend in, as some of the Muslims who wore it realised that they would not only stand out as Muslims, but could possibly be seen as extremists who were involved and were openly supporting those who carried out the bombings in the U.S.A. Those interviewees who were afraid to be seen as Muslims adapted their head coverings, but decided not to remove them. Even when advised by Muslim scholars to remove the hijab if they felt persecuted or fearful, the women interviewed went against these instructions and many organisations such as Pro-hijab loudly spoke out against this advice. Miss BE (new wearer, under 25) announced: It hasn’t made me think not to wear my scarf.

Some of the interviewees expressed how they felt very safe and content with their lives in Britain and feared going to visit other countries such as the U.S.A. Mrs AA (long-term wearer, 40+) responded: I decided to study in Britain instead of America because of 9/11. Mrs DC (past wearer, 25-39) disclosed: I've taken on your culture and values and I have not had a problem as a Muslim with the staff I work with. Khan (2007, p.204-5) however, notes how the women he interviewed in the U.S.A. who wear the hijab post 9/11 had a positive experience when out in public and felt quite safe living there.

Therefore to protect themselves, the wearing of the hijab was seen to be open to negotiation and interpretation in differing situations. Although the wearers of the hijab were all very clear that it had to be worn according to the instructions in the Qur’an there were clearly times when the wearing of the hijab could be negotiated, thus strengthening the case of those who did not wear the hijab who believed that not wearing it was compatible with the Muslim faith. The majority of the interviewees believed wearing the hijab was very important to them, even in the face of conflict from families, and people in authority. Eventually they found that their fears were unfounded and as time passed and the women felt safe again, they returned to wearing
the traditional *hijab* in colours such as black. The increased show of identity in being a Muslim has been an accepted course of action by most citizens in Britain, although there are still those who cannot accept why Muslim women would want to dress in this way and would still take offence at what they perceived to be an extreme outward show of religious affiliation.

### 6.7. Cross-cutting themes

Although the themes already discussed can be identified as the predominant themes that came out of the research, amongst those categories there are also layered and cross-cutting themes, as the women could not be fitted precisely into a schema. From the section on religion/religious community links with other themes can be identified. The women were clearly educating themselves about their own religion and some of the women mentioned in the interviews that Islam is now more accessible, as there is much more information available. The question of being up to date/modern or traditional/out of date was also mentioned by the women. Those who did not wear the *hijab* often wanted to appear modern and saw the wearing of the *hijab* as old fashioned. Being recognised as a Muslim by wearing the *hijab* was also mentioned by some of the women and being able to make friends because you can recognise each other was also an important aspect associated with the wearing of the *hijab*. This is turn led to a new support network of friends for some of the women when they put on the *hijab*. However, these barriers/distinctions could have the opposite effect of distancing the women even further from non-wearing Muslim and non-Muslim members of the population. Another theme that was identifiable from this section was the *hijab* as transitional marker amongst converts. By putting on the *hijab*, the converts from this research, were clearly making a distinction between their non-Muslim lives and their new lives as Muslims. Once they had put on the *hijab* they were visual representatives of Islam and the *hijab* acted as a moral reminder of how they should be behaving when out in public. However, some of the interviewees were certain that you could still be a practising Muslim without the external reminder, and therefore the wearing of the *hijab* could be seen as a trap to being Muslim, when in fact it was not really necessary. Finally, there was the idea of protection, where women who were visual representatives of Islam felt that they were safer from the advances of men when they wore the *hijab*. 
Education also had links with other themes, particularly with friends and family. The classes that these women attended at the Women’s associations meant that the women were meeting with other Muslim women and were making new friends with a common interest. There was also evidence that they were meeting with other Muslims at the conferences that they attended and as such were increasing their friendship networks. The women were reading the instructions found in the Qur’an and the interpretations associated with the hijab and as a result of attending these meetings they were then passing on the information learnt to other friends and family and at times were educating the older generations. This education about the hijab also links back to the religion/religious community section as it was the religious instructions that the women were learning about.

The theme of fashion was also linked to religion/religious community in the sense the religious dress was also in many cases required to be fashionable religious dress. As already mentioned the hijab was often seen as being old fashioned and out of date by some Muslim women and for a number of the women who did wear the hijab there was a desire to be seen as religious and modern. This theme also linked with friends and family as the women wanted to be seen to be wearing the right fashion when out in public and in their Muslim communities. Linking also with 9/11 and the increased interest in Islam is the idea that there is now a new/larger group of women who are wearing the hijab in Britain that want to be seen as fashionable.

9/11 also had links with other themes. As already mentioned the increased attention that Islam was receiving had links with fashion, but 9/11 also linked to the themes of religion/religious community and education. There was evidence that due to this interest in Islam, many of the women were now finding out about their religion for themselves. As a result of this education, many of the women were confident in expressing their religious identity by wearing the hijab, but with this felt that they now had to be seen as good representatives of Islam and be seen to act in a certain way when out in public. However, there was also evidence that some of the women were wary of standing out as Muslims in Britain due to this event.
6.8. Summary

From the evidence from this research and other researchers it is possible to establish that a revival in Islamic dress is occurring not only in Britain, but also in Canada, the U.S.A. and various cities in Europe. All of the women either consciously or sub-consciously had made their own decisions whether to wear the hijab or not. These decisions in the majority of cases were not taken lightly, but were taken as a result of many factors that influenced how the women wanted to be seen.

Post 9/11 as the interest in Islam increased, there was evidence to show that a significant number of women were researching the religious texts for themselves and were making their own interpretations as to whether the hijab should be worn or not. They believed that the choice to wear the scarf was a personal one between the individual and their own interpretation of the scriptures. However, those who had chosen not to wear the hijab spoke of how it was unnecessary to wear it to be a practising Muslim and some saw it as an outdated concept.

Although there were slight differences in the questions asked by the different researchers and the responses given by the women, it can be seen that the hijab is a modern way for many Muslim women to express their beliefs and their identity and to negotiate spaces for themselves. However, this is not a return to a traditional style of Islamic dress that may have been a cultural style but is a new modern way of wearing a ‘fashionable’ head covering.

There were clearly influences that came into play in the women’s lives, but all of the women believed and spoke of how the decision to wear or not wear the hijab was their choice. They were interpreting the scriptures for themselves and were choosing the style of dress that they wanted to wear to give off a certain image when out in public.
Chapter Seven: Analysis and discussion

7.1. Introduction

At the beginning of this study, the notion that the world events starting with 9/11 were having an impact on the way that Muslim women were dressing and that these events were instigating the wearing of the hijab in Britain today, was an important issue to examine. However, the findings demonstrate that, according to the women interviewed, it was not 9/11 that had had a direct impact on their dress, although in some cases it may have been a trigger to find out more about the hijab and their religion. Since 9/11, some of the respondents had become more aware of their religion, and had a greater understanding of why they were doing what they had always done. Some of the new-wearers had put on the hijab before 9/11 and some of them had put it on since, but there was no evidence from these interviewees that they were putting the headscarf on because of it. Although 9/11 made the women think about their religion, the respondents in the various locations in Britain were not motivated to use the hijab as a symbol of politicisation.

Even though all of the women were self-described as Muslims, some were practising Muslims, and some were not, but described themselves as Muslims because they were born into the faith. The clothing choices of the interviewees therefore reflected their individual differences, attitudes and choices but also their religiosity. All of those who wore the hijab claimed that they wore it for religious reasons and that they would wear it if there were men around that they could marry. They wanted to show outwardly that they were Muslims, whereas those who did not wear the hijab felt no need to show that they were Muslims. In Britain today, the hijab is often thought to be worn by the pious, but evidence from this research showed that this is not always true, as some of the practising Muslims did not cover.

When the data was analysed to examine the reasons for wearing or not wearing the hijab these findings go some way to explaining how and why Muslim women make their choices about dress, but they do not present the full picture. Their opinions and beliefs are in fact varied and incredibly complex and there are many factors playing a part in the lives of the respondents. When the theorisation of choice is added to the
mix it is possible to come to some preliminary conclusions as to what is influencing a number of the Muslim women living in Britain today.

7.2. Costs and benefits and the Religious Human Capital approach

From an economic viewpoint, if there is a chance of gaining 10p or 50p a person using rational choice will choose the 50p. People will choose the option that makes them feel better. Therefore, using the theories put forward by Stark and Bainbridge (1987) and Iannaccone (1990), to examine the wearing of the hijab it must follow that the women are gaining some rewards for wearing or not wearing it. However, when the costs and rewards are worked out and attributed to the wearing or non-wearing of the hijab, as Bruce (1993, p.201) points out it should be the ones making the choices that are ‘identifying’ what is a ‘cost or reward’.

In an attempt to work out how and why the women are making the choices they do with regards to their dress, the costs and benefits have been attributed to the groups of women from the insights gained from the research. These costs and rewards were not explicitly articulated by the participants as they were not asked about this in the interviews.

Non-wearers

It is possible to speculate on the costs and benefits that these women experience by not wearing the hijab, using the theory put forward by Stark and Bainbridge (1987). Stark and Bainbridge do not say that the rewards have to be monetary, so by drawing on information gleaned from the participant’s social surroundings and employment situation the costs and benefits can be identified. Financial benefits and the economic approach are included, but the rewards of not wearing the hijab reach much deeper than just monetary gains.

One reward that some of these women spoke of was that they benefitted from being completely accepted by British society; the majority of this category of women could not be visibly identified as being Muslim. Therefore, the threat of hostility because they were Muslims had never been an issue and the women could move around freely.
without fear of persecution. Some of the women stated that were prevented from career options by the wearing of the hijab and felt that the hijab meant that employers treated you differently from non-wearers. Making the assumption that they had the same educational opportunities and qualifications, these women then had access to the same career paths as non-Muslims. They would have the same earning potential and in this sense there could be monetary rewards in higher salaries than some hijab-wearing Muslims.

These women did not see themselves as restricted to living in Muslim areas or communities and were not restricted by the behavioural patterns that usually apply to a wearer of the hijab. If they wished they were free to wear what they wanted and go to any places they chose without being judged as acting inappropriately. However, a cost of this was that these Muslim women were not as respected as the wearers of the hijab by other Muslims and found themselves un-protected from the advances of males. Although a cost to some, for others this may have been a benefit, as they would be able to choose partners from the wider British society rather than from only the Muslim community.

Another important benefit that was evident in the data was the desire not to be seen as very religious by other Muslims. Although all of the women were Muslims, some were keen not to make an outward show of their faith. This did, however, come with a number of costs to the women. Some of these women were often alienated from some aspects of Muslim society and were not included as part of the Muslim community. This in turn led to a lack of identification with other Muslims and an absence of a Muslim social network and friendships. Although the women had friends from other walks of life they were not mixing with those who followed the same faith.

Finally, their lack of knowledge and interest in the religion meant that the idea of compensators was not mentioned. Therefore, for this group of women, the benefits and costs of not wearing the hijab are apparent. Those who do not wear it, still class themselves as Muslims, and can still pray and carry out the five pillars of Islam without some of the costs that wearing the hijab would entail.
Using Iannaccone’s (1990) religious human capital approach, these women who did not wear the *hijab* and had not been practising their religion in their childhood would have only built up a small amount of religious capital. Although they still called themselves Muslims, due mainly to the fact that they were born into the religion, they did not feel the need to spend money on certain types of specialist clothing. However, some explained that they did have religious clothing and would sometimes wear it at home or if they were in their parents’ home.

Applying the approaches of Stark and Bainbridge (1987) and Iannaccone (1990) does not show conclusively why these women, who are content to be classed as Muslims, choose not to wear the *hijab*, because as a theory it does not take account of all the factors that play a part in these women’s lives.

**Past wearers**

This group of women incurred the same costs and benefits as those who were non-wearers from childhood, such as: being accepted by British society; not experiencing career restrictions; not experiencing geographical restrictions of living only in Muslim communities; not being seen as very religious; and were alienated from some aspects of Muslim society. However, those women who had a greater knowledge of the religion than those who had not given it much thought were more concerned about the cost of not being seen as practising Muslims. They also had the desire to lead their lives as followers of the faith and were aware of the rewards or compensators that they would receive after death. They were living lives that they believed were in keeping with the instructions in the Qur’an and what Allah wanted and as such would receive these rewards even though they did not cover their head with the *hijab*.

Applying Iannaccone’s (1990) religious human capital approach to this group of women his theory with regard to denominational mobility does correspond. These women were born into the religion and stayed within the religion of their parents. Many of them were brought up as practising Muslims and therefore had built up some religious capital in the past. They had a substantial amount of religious knowledge and a familiarity with Muslim rituals. They were also, as Iannaccone suggests (1990, p.299) bypassing religious leaders when it came to interpreting the Qur’an and quite
clearly thought that their interpretation was the correct one and that other Muslim women who wore the hijab in Britain were incorrect in feeling this was the only acceptable course of action. However, what the human capital approach does not tell us is why this group of women were rejecting the traditional views in relation to the wearing of the hijab. Had they come up with this viewpoint themselves or had they been influenced by something or someone? What appeared to be conveyed from these women was a sense of dissatisfaction with the Islamic dress that is often worn in Britain and other women who chose to wear the hijab.

Occasional wearers

These women can be classed as a small group as only two women occupy this category. Neither of them appeared to like the wearing of the hijab and through the choices they made with regards to wearing or not wearing it, they had very different costs and benefits to the other four groups.

One of the women, Miss CB, was a Muslim by birth who had worn the hijab since puberty and had therefore experienced the same costs and benefits as those who were classified as long-term wearers. As an occasional wearer she was wearing her hijab under certain circumstances and not wearing it at other times which meant that her costs altered considerably when she chose to remove it. She spoke of how she was from a religious family and had put on the hijab as part of her upbringing without really thinking about it for herself. When I met her she had decided to remove the hijab and spoke of the additional costs of not feeling protected from the advances of males who would now: try to get my number and beep in the street. She also had the costs of upsetting family members, but was reassured that her mother understood her reasons for the removal. The other cost that this woman was not prepared to incur was to be seen without her hijab at work and as she worked for a Muslim employer she continued to wear it. She explained that it was an environment where people are very judgemental. However, the new benefit that she would gain from her experience if she chose to put on the hijab would be that she had made the decision herself. She explained that: Until I am ready to commit to it like I should, I won't wear it. My faith requires that whatever I do should be done with all my heart. When I put it back on it will be for good and will be between me and God.
The second occasional wearer, Mrs CA, was a convert to Islam who had started to wear her hijab seventeen years prior to the interview and expressed how: *I was pushed to wear it by my husband.* As a convert she experienced the same costs and benefits as the other new wearers but as she was also going through a transitional stage of wearing it under certain circumstances and not wearing it at other times, she also experienced extra costs and benefits. As with the other converts Mrs CA had incurred the cost of being alienated from her friends and family when she put on the hijab and now as an occasional wearer she had the extra cost of upsetting the Muslim community that she belonged to and also her husband who felt very strongly that she should return to reading the Qur’an and put the hijab back on. She also expressed in relation to the Qur’an that: *I have read it and I feel guilty for not wearing it.* Therefore like the other occasional wearer this woman experienced additional costs with the removal of the hijab, but her reward is that she can now go out without the hijab as she: … *hated wearing it.* As with the other woman in this group she was of the opinion that if she does decide to wear it again it will be her choice, but at the time of the interview she expressed the idea that the desire to wear the hijab: …*has to go back into the heart and I have lost this.*

**Long-term wearers**

Looking at this group of women it is also possible, using Stark and Bainbridge’s (1987) framework, to identify their costs and benefits. A major benefit for these women was complete acceptance from the Muslim community and an identification with other Muslims which increased their social network and friendships. As the data shows the women commented on how they liked to acknowledge other Muslims when out in the street as they were going about their daily lives. The women that were covered were ultimately protected from advances from other males and were treated respectfully by other Muslims. They were also seen as pious Muslims and with this association with their religion came an increased interest and knowledge in the religion. The women had generally thought about why they were wearing the hijab and were able in many of the cases to state where the instructions could be found in the Qur’an, although not all of the women knew this.
The women’s cost implications that came with the wearing of the *hijab* could also be identified. The women found that particularly since 9/11, they were receivers of hostility and alienated from some aspects and members of British society which meant that they were often restricted to living in Muslim communities. This group of women were seen as very religious by other Muslims and were therefore by the way they dressed restricted from doing certain things, as they were expected to behave in a certain manner once the *hijab* was worn. There was evidence from the interviewees who believed that they were prevented from career options and therefore relating this back to the economic model their benefits or incomes if they chose to go out to work would be less than those who did not wear the *hijab*. There would also be financial implications, as their outfits would often have to be sourced from specialist shops. However, the women did get over this cost by having friends and family make their clothing for them.

Iannaccone’s (1990) religious human capital approach holds more relevance when it is applied to the wearers of the *hijab* than it is to those who do not wear it. For the majority of this group his idea of denominational mobility holds true, as they were born into the religion, and have stayed with the religion that they were brought up with. As surmised they had already invested the time and effort into learning the doctrines of the religion and had a good knowledge of the scriptures. They had already incurred the cost of praying, and reading the scriptures and had bought their religious attire, all costs or inputs associated with this approach.

Therefore, by applying the rational choice theory to this group of women it is evident that by wearing the *hijab*, the costs and the benefits are not just financial. It would be difficult to conclude that economic reasons are why some of the women choose to wear the *hijab*; there has to be something else going on.

**New wearers**

It is also possible to identify the new wearers’ costs and benefits. Their cost implications mirrored those of the other wearers: they were receivers of hostility; alienated from some aspects and members of British society; and often restricted to living in Muslim communities. They were seen as very religious by other Muslims,
restricted from doing certain things, and expected to behave in a certain manner. They were often believed to be prevented from pursuing certain career options.

The benefits that these women received were also the same as the other wearers: they were accepted by the Muslim community; had an identification with other Muslims which increased their social networks; they were protected from advances from other males; respected by other Muslims; and had an increased knowledge and interest in the religion. These women also spoke of an additional benefit in that they would be rewarded with points for paradise if they wore the hijab. This view was expressed by a number of wearers in this group and just discussing the wearing of the hijab as part of this research was seen as a way of obtaining more points for the afterlife.

Therefore for this final group of women the costs of wearing the hijab appear to outweigh the benefits if looked at from a purely economic model and as such would negate the costs and rewards theory of Stark and Bainbridge. However, with their views and belief in the afterlife the ideas put forward by Stark and Bainbridge (1987, p.36) with regard to compensators apply to this group of women. Although the rewards were not always apparent in this life the women had the notion that they were storing up rewards in heaven. Thus, although the costs of wearing the hijab in Britain appear to outweigh the benefits there is evidence that the compensators in the future are felt to outweigh the costs.

When the religious human capital approach put forward by Iannaccone (1990, p.300) is applied to this group of women, there is much empirical evidence in support of it. With the exception of the converts, the women match with the denominational mobility pattern and have remained within the parameters of the religion in which they grew up. When they had a renewed interest in religion they researched the one to which they already belonged and into which they were born, and those women who put on the hijab because of this renewed interest in their faith were already Muslims. However, this group of women had not built up as much capital as some of the other wearers who had been wearing the hijab from childhood. These women tended to be the wearers from adulthood and as stated had found a renewed interest in their faith. It was at this point that time and effort was invested in the practising of Islam. These women although familiar with the doctrines of the religion were now spending time
praying and reading the scriptures in particular the Qur’an and related documents and of relevance to this research they were reading about the wearing of the hijab. These women in particular were bypassing the religious leaders and had built up for themselves a substantial religious knowledge.

As Iannaccone’s (1990, p.299) work suggests the more these women participated in their religion and took part in women’s groups the more religious satisfaction they received. The wearing of the ‘religious attire’ in this case the hijab, meant that the women were participating fully and as such had an obvious connection with other Muslim women which in turn lead to friendships with other worshippers which again lead to more satisfaction.

This group included the converts who added another dimension to the data. They also received the same benefits and had the same costs as the other wearers in the sample, but they incurred an extra cost. They were not only alienated from some members of British society, they also found that they were often alienated from their own families once they had converted and put on the hijab, and therefore have not as Iannaccone (1990, p.300) suggested stayed ‘… within their parents’ denominations’ to minimise costs. From the data gathered for this research it is possible to see that Iannaccone (1990) and Bruce (1993) are correct in one aspect as the conversions did take place at an early age and the women were looking for something that was missing in their lives. However, these explanations do not give us answers as to why the women all chose to move to a different religion completely. From an economic viewpoint, for these women the benefits of converting to Islam and putting on the hijab must have outweighed the cost; otherwise it would be an irrational choice.

These rational choice and economic theories do give us some of the answers but they do not give us the whole picture. Why did the women convert and more importantly why did the conversion mean that the women put on the hijab?

The value of cost-benefit models will remain hard to assess (but impossible to dismiss) until we begin asking people what they have sacrificed for the sake of their faith. (Iannaccone, 1995, p.80)
Thus, rational choice theory and religion and the religious human capital approach may contribute to, but not fully explain why women wear or do not wear the hijab in Britain today. Both theories do go a certain way in giving some answers as to why people are religious, but do not give us the reasons behind individual or group choices, to do this, as Chaves (1995, p.99) explains, more information would be needed about the preferences of each individual. The women interviewed do not all approach religion in the same way and the research shows that the wearing or not wearing of the hijab is not just about costs and benefits. The women do not slot nicely into the pattern put forward by this theory as it was found that there were varying degrees of participation among the women from fully immersed in the religion and everything that goes with it, to being a non-practising Muslim, although still classifying themselves as a Muslim because they were born into the faith. However, as the theory proposes the respondents were researching the religion for themselves, but these respondents were coming up with a variety of different answers.

If rational choice theory and religion is about people choosing their religion to maximise their benefits then this theory does not give answers to the choices I am trying to explain. This theory does not tell us why Muslim women choose to wear or not wear the hijab in Britain today. The benefits of wearing the hijab obviously outweigh the negativity, indicating that there are other interactions that need to be taken into account. For example the potential hostility received when wearing the hijab does not outweigh the benefits. These women have decided on a certain approach and their motivations have led them to wear the hijab. Rational choice theory often assumes that everyone’s benefits and liabilities can be quantified and that all things are valued the same, but does not take into account what influences people. Ultimately the wearing of the hijab is about long-term salvation, which is also a problem for rational choice theory.

What rational choice theory does not take into account is the religiously informed ways of looking at the world. Rational choice theory implies that you are investing in your social capital through religion, although these women are making some kind of investment in a different scale of values. They are not just making an investment in social capital but in benefits outside of the social context for example a chance of paradise. Theorists who like to explain things by that which is measurable, exclude
discussions around belief and faith. It could well be the belief in their religion that is really motivating these women in their choices. This could be considered to be an investment in eternal capital. The rational choice theory of explaining people’s behaviour without looking at the faith that these women have is excluding other ways of looking at the reasons for the choices that the women are making.

7.3. Rational Choice Theory and Social Constraints

Relating rational choice theory and social constraints, as explained by Sherkat (1997, p.66) to the women interviewed for this research, it is possible to examine whether the ‘individual preferences’ of the women were shaped by their childhood experiences and whether ‘social influences’ are having an effect on the manifestation of their religious beliefs. As this research was based solely on the wearing of the hijab it will not always be possible to state whether the interviewees had good relationships with their parents as children.

Non-wearers

There is evidence from this group of women that they are following the faith of their parents that was passed down to them during their childhood. However, their styles of dress did not always relate to their upbringing. Although this group of women are all non-wearers, when looked at more closely as individuals it is possible to see something of ‘what is going on inside people [sic] heads’ as Sherkat suggests (1997, p.67).

Three of these women wore the dupatta as a child and were expected to wear their ‘cultural dress’ when they were younger. As soon as these women’s circumstances changed the dupatta was removed and was not replaced with the fixed hijab. One of these women still lived and worked within a Muslim community, but did not feel the need to cover her head. However, she did express how she was encouraging her own children to be proud of their heritage in a way that she was not as a child. The other two women were in the older age group and had stopped wearing the ‘cultural’ head covering when they came to live in Britain. However, they both explained that they would still put some kind of cover over their head if they were with family members
or at a family gathering. One of these women was the mother of another interviewee and it was evident that in this case the idea of not wearing the *hijab* that was present in the mother had also been passed down to the daughter. Even though the daughter always covered her legs, she was happy to wear short sleeves and no head covering. These women had a good relationship which was obvious when they came to the interview together.

The other eight women in this group consisted of two sisters, neither of whom covered their heads, and did not appear to have been encouraged by their parents to do so and five other non-wearers that had not been encouraged to wear any head covering as they grew up, although one did explain how she wore a *jilbab* at home with her Moroccan parents.

The last woman in this group however, was showing all of the signs that Sherkat (1997, p.66) had noticed in the sense that there were strong ‘social influences’ playing a part in her life. This particular woman did not wear anything remotely Islamic as a young woman and described her dress as: *Western*. It was only upon marrying a Muslim and moving into the Muslim community that she began to wear the ‘cultural dress’ that she explained was expected of her. As she now wore a *sari* on a daily basis she also explained that she would put this over her head because she does not want to stand out in the family. Therefore, although this woman’s ‘individual preference’ may have been Western clothing, she was ‘constrained’ by her ‘social influences’ namely the family that she had married into and in order to please them she was happy to wear their ‘cultural clothing’ that was expected of her. It appeared from her responses that she did not have a choice in this, as explained by Sherkat (1997, p.76) her ‘family, religion, employment, ethnicity, neighbourhood, and the like are entangled’.

**Past wearers**

This group of four women consisted of two women who had been ‘constrained’ by their religion when they lived in Muslim countries and therefore had no choice but to cover their heads. When they moved to Britain their ‘individual preferences’ for not wearing the *hijab*, were expressed by not standing out as Muslims. They did not appear to have any strong ties with families that they were trying to please or
displease and as noted by Sherkat (1997, p.76) their ‘family, religion, employment, ethnicity, neighbourhood, and the like …’ did not appear to be ‘entangled’. A third member of the group expressed how she had not worn the *hijab* when she was young at school and therefore an assumption could be made that she had not been encouraged to wear it by her parents. However, she did cover her head for a while, as she expressed her ‘individual preference’ for taking it off once she was married at the age of twenty-one, which implies that there were ‘social influences’ that were playing a part and were ‘constraining’ her before she married. As part of her interview she did mention that she would cover her head in certain situations such as going to buy a *sari* in her local community shops or if she was at an ‘Asian’ party where men would be present. The last woman in this group had been brought up by religious parents who had passed on their beliefs to their daughter; however, even though she had taken on the beliefs of her parents, she did not appear to have a good relationship with them. She explained that she had been ‘just about’ forced to wear the *dupatta* as a child and as with another member of the group she expressed her ‘individual preference’ and stopped covering her head when she married. Once this woman had expressed her own preference for not wearing the *hijab*, it appears to have created a tension with her family who believed that she was not religious. Therefore, the choices that this respondent was making with regards to her dress were displeasing her family even though she was a practising Muslim and had carried on the beliefs taught to her as a child.

**Occasional wearers**

Mrs CA was brought up as a member of the Church of England and any religious preferences that had been passed down to her as a child had been rejected when she married her husband and converted to Islam. However, even though the conversion was her choice she was ‘constrained’ as Sherkat (1997, p.66) calls it by the ‘social influences’ mainly of her husband who she claimed had made her wear the *hijab*, and the Muslim community who she displeased when she decided to take it off. Mrs CA talked of putting it on again to please her husband but felt that she couldn’t until it felt right in her heart.
Miss CB appears to have had a very good relationship with her parents, followed the traditions and religious beliefs passed down from them and put on the hijab as part of her beliefs and her upbringing. However, as a young adult Miss CB was now expressing her ‘individual preference’ to remove the hijab and make sure that she was wearing it for the right reasons. Even though her parents were not happy with the decision they understood why she has made it and accept it. Despite all of this, Miss CB was still, as Sherkat (1997, p.66) shows, ‘constrained’ by ‘social influences’ and although her preference was not to wear the hijab she felt that she had to wear it to go to her place of employment.

**Long-term wearers**

This group of women seem to all correspond with the findings of Sherkat (1997, p.66) in so far as their ‘preferences’ become stronger with ‘consumption’. The more these women took part in their religion, the more importance their religion had in their lives. These women had all learned their religious knowledge from their parents and seemed to have had good childhood experiences in relation to their religious upbringing. They did not appear to be wearing the hijab in order to please anybody other than ‘God’ and from their responses it was clear that the wearing of the hijab was their own choice. However, what cannot be certain from this group of women was whether there were ‘social influences’ playing a part and whether the women felt ‘constrained’ by their religion. Six of these women were living in Muslim communities and therefore while it was their choice there may have been some ‘social influences’. Particularly in my research there is evidence that friends and family were influencing the choices that these women made. All of these women stated that the hijab was part of their religion, it was in the Qur’an and it had to be worn and now that they were wearing it, it had also become part of who they were. The obvious constraint that the majority of the women mentioned was being covered if there were men present.

**New wearers**

This last group of women were quite diverse and appeared to have a number of ‘social influences’ that had inspired them to put on the hijab or convert to Islam. The
converts for a variety of reasons decided to reject any religious ‘preferences’ that they had learnt as children and changed to become Muslims. This mostly coincided with marriage to a Muslim man, although one exception found the religion whilst working in a Muslim environment. The choice to put on the hijab followed as it was seen as something that had to be done and part of the religion.

The rest of the new wearers had to a varying extent learned their religious ‘preferences’ from their parents, as they had been brought up as Muslims although there was evidence that some of the parents had not taken the religion very seriously themselves. They all appeared to be close to their parents and accepted their religious teachings. There did appear to be a gap in the knowledge as some of the new wearers had been inspired by Muslim teachers in the communities in which they were living. There were clearly other ‘social influences’ at play amongst many of these women who lived in Muslim communities and had been inspired by watching others putting on the hijab. There was evidence that they had heard positive comments about wearing the hijab from friends and family suggesting that some of these women may have not only wanted to please themselves but others as well. According to Sherkat (1997, p.76) even though these women were making their own choices as adults it could still be that ‘a number of social positions are interwoven’.

As Sherkat (1997, p.66) pointed out, rational choice theory does not take into account any of the social influences acting on the women and from the evidence it is clear that friends and family have a huge influence on the behaviour of the women. Therefore the wearing or not wearing of the hijab is not just about costs and benefits, it is also about the influences that play a part in the lives of the women. As already stated in chapter three, rational choice theory takes us some way to understanding what is happening with the respondents and the religious human capital approach put forward by Iannaccone (1990, p.313) that ‘Religious upbringing, probably the most important source of religious human capital, is a major determinant of religious belief and behavior [sic]’ is evident in this research.
7.4. Family

Although Crockett and Voas (2006, p.579) only examined briefly the religiosity of immigrants and ethnic minorities, including ‘Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (overwhelmingly Muslim)’ it is of interest to see if their theories on religious decline could be applied to the group of women studied for this research. There is some evidence in my research to support the idea that: ‘people have become less religious … than their parents’ (Voas 2010, p.28); ‘parental values have become more liberal’ (Voas 2010, p.29); young adults have changed in their outlook and have responded to changes in society (Voas 2010, p.30); and that ‘geographical mobility’ (Voas 2010, p.31) can have effect on the way that a religion is practised.

Non-wearers

These women did appear to be less religious than their parents (Voas 2010, p.28), as they had never worn the hijab. Among this group were a couple of the 40+ women who had worn the dupatta as a child when they lived abroad, but had not continued to wear it when they came to live in Britain, showing that in these two cases ‘geographical mobility’ (Voas 2010, p.31) did play a part. One of these women in particular still wore her cultural dress on a daily basis, but her daughter as already noted in chapter six was actively discouraged from putting on the hijab by her father telling her that: the hijab doesn’t mean anything. Also a respondent, who had been thinking about putting on the hijab at University, explained how her mother had told her that she: would get over it. Her sister had a slightly different view to the wearing of the hijab and although at the time of the interview felt that it was not the right thing for her, she has since started to wear it, thus going against the idea of generational decline (Crockett and Voas 2006, Voas 2010). This supports the idea that their parents had not encouraged the wearing of the hijab, but in contrast, one of them had sought out the information for herself and had decided to wear it.
Past wearers

For the past wearers, ‘geographical mobility’ (Voas 2010, p.31) did play a significant part in their choices whether to wear the *hijab* or not. Two of the women came from Islamic countries where the wearing of it was enforced and therefore, when they came to live in Britain, and they had the choice, they were both adamant that the *hijab* should not be worn. Others in this group also correspond to the evidence discovered by Voas (2010, p.31) as once they had moved to a new area they decided not to wear the *hijab*. One found the freedom when she married, and another tried the fixed *hijab* for a short period of time and decided that it was not for her, and as a result incurred negative comments from the rest of the family. The difference for these Muslim women is that they were from religious families who expected the *hijab* to be worn, and were not from families where the ‘parental values have become more liberal’ (Voas 2010, p.29).

Occasional wearers

These women seem to bridge the gap between the other groups of women in the sense that they had worn the *hijab*, but had also rejected it, even though they wore it on some occasions. One of the women converted to Islam, and therefore, was not educated in the religion as a child. ‘Geographical mobility’ (Voas 2010, p.31) however, did play a part in the sense that when she converted she left her old family and friends behind to follow the religion of her husband, the *hijab* was worn and this interviewee became part of this new community. The other participant came from a religious family who had passed on the values and knowledge of the religion, but as an adult the interviewee had decided that she needed to make the decision for herself. She had not moved away from her family and in fact still lived in the family home. In her case it could have been the ‘secular competition’ and the influence of society that was playing a role in her life and decision making.
**Long-term wearers**

These women like the non-wearers had not really made any significant changes to their dress as they became adults. They had all followed the traditions laid down for them and the majority of them on reaching puberty had put on the hijab and had continued to wear it. Changes in society had not had an influence on these women and although some of these women had moved to Britain from other countries, this ‘geographical mobility’ Voas (2010, p.31) had not changed the way that the women saw the hijab nor had it encouraged them to take it off.

**New wearers**

The new wearers (excluding the converts) showed that for some of the followers of Islam, it does appear that the older generations that either came to live in Britain or grew up here have ‘become more liberal’ (Voas 2010, p29) as in contrast it can be found that in some Muslim families it is the younger generation that are putting on the hijab. The women who were putting on the hijab as adults, including the converts, were not necessarily following the opinions of their parents. Indeed there was evidence from one of the women who was brought up in a Muslim household, that some of the younger generation were educating the older generation as to what they should be wearing. Her parents were not particularly religious and she explained how her father would: *pick us up from the mosque in the middle of prayer time* and that her younger sister *is being taught very differently from how I was taught*. A second interviewee proudly explained that she has now: *become a role model for her children* and a third member of this group thought that: *people who came in the 70s weren’t concentrating on their children. Now this generation are concentrating on bringing their kids up as Muslims*. The older generation could be described as ‘more liberal’, as it is the younger Muslim women who are focusing more on the religion and the values it holds. This group of women does point to the fact that their religious commitment did ‘stabilise’ in their ‘mid-20s’ as the majority of this group were 25-39. However, those converts who were 40+ when interviewed had converted when they were much younger and their religious commitment did also ‘stabilise’. As these women had made the decision to put on the hijab as adults, many had already left home and therefore the influence of their parents was often lessened. There was also evidence
that attendance at University and greater education in Islam was leading to the increase in religious affiliation.

The type of influence associated with the family as noted by Voas (2010, p.29) where parents do not see the passing on their religion as important as it used to be, can to some extent be seen in this research. Many of the non-wearers fit this example as there was to be found more emphasis on not wearing the hijab than on wearing it. The second idea put forward by Voas (2010, p.31) that people make changes once they move away from the powers controlling them, can also be evidenced in this research, as some of the past wearers changed their type of dress when they moved from either an Islamic country or their parents. The occasional wearers decided on what to wear regardless of their family’s influence and adapted to whichever situation they were in. Although the parents of the non-wearers had become more ‘liberal’ in their outlook, the parents of the past wearers and occasional wearers had not. However, for many of the hijab wearing women the reverse of the conclusions reached by Crockett and Voas (2006) and Voas (2010) in their examination of religious decline was happening. The long-term wearers still practised their religion and had not made any changes to their dress despite moving to different areas of the country and the new wearers, although some of their parents had become more ‘liberal’ in the transmission of their faith were finding that they were being educated as to what they should be wearing by their daughters and their granddaughters. Therefore, what needs to be established is why some Muslims are now taking an interest in their religion and putting on the hijab when it appears that other faiths are declining.

From the research by Guest (2010, p.178) with children of the Clergy, comes the idea of ‘spiritual capital’ that these adults had acquired during their childhood. The results of my research also show that the women regardless of their clothing were using their ‘spiritual capital’ that they had gained through their up bringings as Muslims in their adult lives. The women interviewed for this research were not the daughters of Imams, nor were they all from religious families; however, the one thing that they did all claim was that they were Muslims, and just as the research by Guest (2010, p.180) found that children of the clergy were involved in particular professions that were in sympathy with their beliefs, so too were all of these women. Out of the forty-two women interviewed: twelve were students; twelve were housewives; eight worked in
administration including six of these working for Muslim employers; nine were teachers or teaching assistants; and one worked for a Muslim airline. Their participation in jobs that were in tune with the tenets of Islam meant that the women were able to wear or not wear the *hijab* and were not found to be in any conflict with other employees or their employers. This meant that regardless of whether the women wore the *hijab* or not, their vocations enabled them to continue their religious ideals. Particularly relevant for the *hijab* wearing women was that they had found niches where they were comfortable in their *hijab* and the wearing of it did not cause any conflict either real or perceived. The way some of the women had been brought up had therefore, as Guest (2010, p.180) explains had been transformed into their adult life. However, what research such as this does not help us to explain is whether the interviewees for my research had chosen their careers consciously or sub-consciously. Was it the case that the wearers of the *hijab* chose their professions where they knew they would be accepted and would be comfortable?

### 7.5 Lifestyle choices

In relation to the data gathered from this research it is possible to look at the five categories of dress to see if the influences as identified by Giddens (1991, p.82) corresponds with the reasons expressed by the women. Although Giddens does not talk specifically about religious dress, for this research, it is the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* that is being examined.

#### Non-wearers

Despite the fact that these women classed themselves as Muslims they were not using the *hijab* as an expression of their self-identity. As noted previously not all of the women wanted to appear religious and tended to choose clothes that did not make them stand out as Muslims. When looking at the influences, this group of women felt that they were not constrained by tradition and were therefore choosing to wear Western dress. There were two exceptions to this, one of the women wore what she described as a fusion of Western and Eastern influences and an older interviewee wore a traditional *shalwar kameez* as she had been brought up wearing that style of outfit from childhood. As noted by Giddens (1991, p.84) these women were also
exposed to globalisation and were aware of the different types of *hijab* that could be worn, but were still choosing not to wear it. Therefore their style of dress was not being used to assert their religious identity and as noted previously there was not the expectation of a certain behaviour type associated with the way the women looked. However, some of these women were exposed to some pressures, which did not advocate the wearing of the *hijab*.

**Past wearers**

The past wearers as with the non-wearers classed themselves as Muslims but they too were not using the *hijab* as an expression of their self-identity. Although these women were practising Muslims they did not always approve of wearing the *hijab* in Britain and some chose clothes that did not make them stand out as Muslims. Some of these women had disliked being different when growing up and attending British schools and found it a relief to remove their head coverings to blend in and were taking advantage of what Giddens (1991, p.82) refers to as ‘the post-traditional order’. Other women had come to live in Britain from Muslim countries and were very vocal that according to the Qur’an, women should not wear clothing that drew attention to the wearer and therefore were adamant that the wearing of the *hijab* in Britain would draw attention and should not be worn. This group of women also felt that they were not constrained by tradition and were therefore choosing to wear Western dress. Only one of this group still lived in an area where those around her were, as Giddens (1991, p.83) claims, a ‘comparable type’, but she worked in a non-Muslim environment and in order to succeed in her career she felt that she would be passed over for promotion and treated differently if she wore the *hijab*. Some of these women were out in the workplace and were not only exposed to globalisation, but to a variety of women who were not Muslim. They appeared to be professional women who formed their own self-identities without the use of the *hijab* and were free to make their own ‘lifestyle choices’ as referred to by Giddens (1991, p.83).
Occasional wearers

Both of the women in this small group were influenced by living in, as Giddens (1991, p.82) calls it, a ‘post-traditional order’. Miss CB was studying at University and had discovered that the tradition that she was following without thinking had to be reviewed to make sure that she was wearing the *hijab* for the right reasons. Although she was influenced by the ‘dominance of the local community’ Giddens (1991, p83) in her part-time workplace, when she was not at work she removed the *hijab* and was therefore, making ‘lifestyle choices’ and was wearing or not wearing the *hijab* for certain activities. Mrs CA, on the other hand, who had decided that she did not want to wear the *hijab*, was being cajoled by her husband who wanted to stick rigidly to, as Giddens (1991, p.82) calls it the ‘signposts established by tradition’. He wanted her to be seen as a Muslim and follow the traditions and her refusal to read the Qur’an and put on the *hijab* was a source of conflict.

Long-term wearers

These women go against the influences that Giddens sets out in his work on self-identity. Although these women all live in Britain they are retaining, as Giddens (1991, p.82) calls them, the ‘signposts established by tradition’. The majority of these women were not as Giddens (1991, p.83), citing Berger (1974) suggests affected by the ‘pluralisation of life-worlds’ as they were either students or worked in Muslim communities where they were surrounded by as coined by Giddens (1991, p.83) others of a ‘comparable type’ They had all chosen to follow Islamic tradition from an early age by putting on the *hijab* and had not changed in their outlook towards the wearing of it. Their ‘lifestyle choices’ as Giddens (1991, p.83) offered had not become segmented as they wore the *hijab* irrespective of the activity that they were taking part in. Only one of these younger women spoke of the variety of styles of *hijab* that were available.
New wearers

Again this group of women not only counteract the influences that Giddens (1991, p.82) sets out in his work on self-identity, but actively seek to return to and uphold what he calls, the ‘signposts established by tradition’. These women who had put on the *hijab* were choosing who they wanted to be and were asserting their own self-identity. Within this group of women were the converts who were actively seeking to establish their Muslim identity at a later stage in their lives. Most of these women when interviewed were between the ages of 25-39 and had made the conscious decision to wear the *hijab*. They were connected either to the mosques already mentioned, or worked at or attended the Women’s Associations: from talking to these women it was clear that Giddens’ (1991, p.83) ‘the dominance of the local community’ had definitely not disappeared but was very important in their lives. The women in this group actively took part in the Muslim community and contributed to its continuation. Three of the interviewees were part of the extended network of one of the *hijab* wearing Muslim converts and the other one was a University student who was visiting from abroad. These women wore the *hijab* irrespective of the activity in which they were taking part in, although there was evidence that according to Giddens (1991, p.83) their ‘lifestyle choices’ were influenced by group pressures and the visibility amongst their communities of role models. When it came to Giddens’ (1991, p.84) idea of ‘globalisation of the media’, however, these women were not oblivious to what was being said about Islam and were taking an active role in discovering about Islam for themselves. When it came to the styles of *hijab* on offer, the women had a plethora of dress styles from a variety of cultures that they could choose from and were aware of the fashions on offer. Their style of dress was being used to assert their religious identity and with that came the expectation of a certain behaviour type associated with the way the women looked.

Therefore, those who had chosen not to wear the *hijab* or had removed it, correspond with Giddens’ theories surrounding self-identity. However, those who chose to wear it do not. These wearers of the *hijab* were still following tradition, and many still live in Muslim communities alongside other women who wore the same dress. However, although many of the women were influenced by the globalisation of Islamic dress
and were aware of the fashion that could be worn, they were still looking to dress within the confines laid down in the Qur’an, and uphold those traditions.

The lifestyle theory put forward by Giddens (1991, p.80) does not help to establish why the women choose to wear the *hijab*, as this theory states that ‘we all choose our own self-identity and modernity has an influence on that’. The non-wearers and past wearers were not using the *hijab* as a show of their Muslim identity, although in line with the thoughts of Giddens (1991, p.81) they have all chosen their own styles of dress to express themselves. The occasional wearers were again moving between those groups of women who do wear the *hijab* and those who do not and were making distinct choices when to use their dress as an expression of their Muslim identity and under what circumstances. The long-term wearers and new wearers, however, were using their Muslim dress as part of their self-identity sometimes in line with traditions that had been passed to them. The women were very aware of different styles of Islamic dress and types of Western dress that could be worn by Muslim women, but were going against these alternatives. Therefore, for the overt and strong advocates of the wearing of the *hijab*, even though they were asserting their own self-identity, many of the women were not embracing modernity, but were looking back to the time when the Prophet Muhammad had his revelations and were trying to replicate the type of dress that these revelations produced. Again this theory does not tell us why the women are making the choices to do this. Why are they all not wearing Western dress with a matching scarf? Why are they looking back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad for inspiration with regards to their dress choices? Why do they feel the need to do this?

7.6. Habitus

The idea of habitus may indeed account for some of the reasons why the long-term wearers of the *hijab* were still wearing it and why new wearers were putting it on. There is indeed evidence from my research that the long-term wearers and the new wearers are influenced by the idea of habitus and a sense of agency as put forward by Mahmood (2001). Just as the women’s mosque movement in Egypt were meeting to talk about the instructions in the Qur’an there was evidence from the women that I interviewed that they too were, through the groups at the mosques and at the
Women’s Associations, meeting to learn about Islam and the instructions that they should be following. These women were not following the instructions that had been given to them by the Imams but were either being taught by other Muslim women or were researching the information for themselves.

Many of the women regardless of their type of dress expressed the opinion that once the *hijab* had been put on it could not just be removed and that the reasons for the wearing of the *hijab* should be thought through before it was worn. Advice such as this also came from some of the parents of the younger women who were thinking about putting on the *hijab* for the first time. Other wearers expressed the opinion that they would not be able to stop wearing the *hijab* for any reason. Even under the threat of violence after the 9/11 and 7/7 bombings and the advice to remove the *hijab* from the late Dr Badawi, the women could not bring themselves to take it off. Some of the women even wore it at home in the house as they expressed that the wearing of the *hijab* was such a habit that they kept it on. Indeed some of the women interviewed in their homes who were wearing the *hijab* explained that this was due to the fact that it was habit. Many of the wearers spoke of how they behaved differently when they wore the *hijab* and were aware of how they must behave in a way to show that they were good Muslims. The wearers did not like to see the *hijab* being worn incorrectly or worn with inappropriate clothing that revealed the shape of the body. There was an understanding that if you were wearing the *hijab* then your behaviour should also reflect the fact that you were a religious woman.

Therefore, habitus is playing a large part in the lives of the long-term and new wearers of the *hijab*, and does offer a reason why some Muslim women in Britain today are still wearing the *hijab* despite all of the influences playing a part in their lives. The majority of the women spoken to as part of this research had looked at the instructions in the Qur’an for themselves had talked and discussed them with other Muslim women and had come to the conclusions as to what should be worn. These women expressed how their behaviour should match their outward appearance and that once the *hijab* had been put on they acted in an appropriate manner in line with the teachings of Islam. The wearing of *hijab* was not just seen as a cover because of their gender, but was an indication of an acceptance of the instructions from the Qur’an and for some of the women led to a greater connection to God. Once the *hijab* had been
worn for a while the women were convinced that the inner self reflects the outer self and the *hijab* cannot just be removed, resembling the argument put forward by Mahmood (2001, p.214) when carrying out her research with the ‘women’s mosque movement’ in Egypt. However, the idea of habitus as expressed by Mahmood (2001, p.215) does not, according to the responses for this research, appear to apply to those who have stepped away from wearing the *hijab* or have never worn it. What habitus does not tell us is why these Muslims are not exploring the religion for themselves and putting on the *hijab*. Even though many know it is an instruction in the Qur’an why are they choosing not to wear it?

7.7. Individualization

When examining the idea of individualization, it does appear that this theory may be of some help in explaining some of the choices that the women interviewed for this research are making. Individualization according to Beck (2009, p.203) is about making ‘… a ‘life of one’s own’’ and this may account for why those who are against the wearing of the *hijab* have removed it. They are shrugging off the constraints of tradition and are embracing modern ways of dressing and at the same time are still practising Muslims, however, it does appear from my research that individualization has had the opposite effect on some of the *hijab* wearing Muslims in Britain. Instead of embracing individualization it is pushing these women to hold on more strongly to their traditions. They are following traditional family roles and many of the women interviewed either do not go out to work or are involved in education in some way. This theory may indeed account for some of the reasons why the non-wearers had never put on the *hijab*; why the past wearers had decided to remove their head coverings; and why the occasional wearers were undecided, but it does not explain why long-term wearers of the *hijab* are still wearing it and why new wearers are putting it on. Why are they not only sticking to traditional and family values but promoting this traditional way of dressing?
7.8. The individualization thesis debate

The ideas of Smart and Shipman (2004) both sociologists, also correspond with the women interviewed for my research. The Smart and Shipman (2004 p.506) discovery that individualization was possibly ‘too one-dimensional’ and only told part of the story, can also be concluded from this research. However, these women are not without influence when it comes to the wearing of the hijab and individualization could be having an effect on their dress choices. Smart and Shipman (2004, p.495) found that ‘religious faith’ was a contributing factor in the decision-making process of their respondents and the same conclusion can be reached with the women I interviewed. All of the women were aware of their religious identity and background and were making choices using these past experiences from older generations with a mixture of their own interests and experiences. The women interviewed regardless of their dress choices were acting as individualized subjects in making their own decisions about whether or not to cover. Instead of the traditional view of being part of an intensely patriarchal society, where men made all of the decisions they were making the active choices for themselves. They were bypassing Imams when it came to interpreting the scriptures and were finding out the meanings for themselves. Many were attending women’s groups at the mosques to meet and learn about Islam and they were attending Islamic education classes at the Women’s Associations.

Ultimately, as Beck (2009 p.203) explains it, they were choosing ‘…a ‘life of one’s own’’, and as part of this some of the interviewees were combining the traditional way of dressing that was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad with a more modern interpretation of Islam and this was expressed through the dress choices that they were making. However, what this theory does not show is why there is a resurgence in the wearing of the hijab happening now? Why are the women suddenly educating themselves about the hijab and then why are some choosing to link back to tradition and wear the hijab as part of their self-identity while some women are choosing to be totally ‘modern’ and not wear the hijab? This approach does not tell us what is motivating the women to put on the hijab at this particular point in time.
7.9. Summary

So far this chapter has identified a selection of theories that have been used to try and identify the processes that the women use when they are making their choices about what to wear. Also my findings and other research with Muslim women have identified a number of reasons why Muslim women choose to wear or not wear the *hijab*. Dwyer (1999) shows that there is an increased interest in the wearing of the *hijab* which is being used by Muslim women to negotiate their own spaces in public and found that the wearing of the *hijab* was the choice of the women interviewed. Anwar and Shah (2000) highlighted the fact that there was a renewed interest in the wearing of the *hijab* and that women were making the decision for themselves. Read and Bartkowski (2000) note that the women make their own choices whether to veil or not and the multicultural society in which they find themselves living allows them to do this. Bullock (2003) found that according to the interviewees the *hijab* was worn for religious reasons, could be found in the Qur’an and was the motivating factor behind the wearing of the *hijab*. Bullock (2003) identified how the women felt a sense of freedom when they wore the *hijab* which gave them the opportunities to enter male environments that they would not feel comfortable in if they were not covered. Bullock (2003) also found evidence that the wearing of the *hijab* was the choice of the women she interviewed. Khan (2007) found that the women were putting on the *hijab* as part of their Muslim identity, and that it was the younger generation that were influencing the older generations. Khan (2007) showed that it was the women that were making the choices for themselves whether to wear the *hijab* or not. Afshar (2008) explained how the wearing of the *hijab* was the women’s own choice. They had come to their own conclusions what to wear through their own interpretations of the Qur’an, showing that the wearing of the *hijab* was to do with both religion and identity. Silvestri’s (2009) research identified how Muslim women in Britain and Europe chose for themselves whether to wear the *hijab* or not, but at the same time have to deal with a number of influences on the way they dress such as family, friends, the religious community and non-Muslims. Silvestri (2009) notes how the ‘re-Islamisation’ is happening in Europe does not involve wearing the *hijab*, whereas my participants thought that the resurgence in Islam meant that women were putting on the *hijab*. Contractor (2012) found that the wearing of the *hijab* was the women’s choice. However, differing from my research Contractor (2012) questioned her
participants on whether the *hijab* was a form of ‘male dominance’ and the women responded that it was not if it was their own choice to wear it. They also explained how it was used as a way of demanding their ‘Islamic rights’.

Having examined these choice theories and applied the findings from my research, it is now possible to come up with a judgement as to which theory is the most important in helping to establish why women wear or do not wear the *hijab* in Britain today. Rational choice theory and the religious human capital approach show some of the costs and benefits associated with the wearing or non-wearing of the *hijab*, so by applying this approach we can predict some of the costs and benefits that this incurs. Although it offers an insight into the issues facing Muslim women, the wearing of the *hijab* is not about monetary or financial gains and other factors have to be playing a part in the wearing of the *hijab* otherwise it becomes an irrational choice when the costs appear to outweigh the benefits. Therefore the economic approach does not give us enough information about why the women make the choices they make.

Examining rational choice theory and social constraints does take us a stage closer to why the women are choosing to wear or not wear the *hijab*. Social influences such as family, religion, employment, ethnicity and neighbourhood are all playing a part in the lives of the women and have an influence on the women’s preferences as adults. All of the women claimed that the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* was their own choice, so whether they have reflected at length on the fact that those around them are clearly influencing their decisions is difficult to clarify. The women are clearly influenced by friends and family, although this is not the whole story as the women are not simply acceding to the wishes of their friends and family. Opinions of friends and family are important, but often the women are in opposition to the wishes of those around them and are clearly making their own decisions in spite of the opinions of others.

Rational choice theory including the human capital approach and the social constraints arguments predict that similar groups sorted by religious belief will behave in similar manners, but it is clear from my research that this group of women do not behave similarly. The theory is not picking up enough ways in which these women’s decisions are being influenced. Similar groups of individuals are making
different choices, and using rational choice theory, this implies that some of these choices are irrational, meaning that the women should not be looked at in this way. Even if the women appear to be choosing a path that is detrimental to them, these women believe that it is the right thing to do. People make decisions that make sense to them and these women are reacting to the same stimuli in different ways and if they are acting in their own best interests, these interests must be different in some way.

When Crockett and Voas (2006) and Voas (2010) examined religious decline and the influence of the family in transmitting religious belief it illuminated some of the issues concerning Muslim women, but it could be argued that the Muslim religion/society is in a different phase in relation to the transmission of the beliefs. There was a religious commonality between the older and younger generations of Christians whereas for this group of Muslim women the view of correct behaviour between the older and younger generations was not always the same. Amongst Christian families the transmission of the faith was moving downwards through the differing age groups, whereas due to a re-interpretation of what was and was not the correct religious observance it was often the younger generation of Muslim women who were influencing the older. The theory of Crockett and Voas (2006) and Voas (2010) that religion was in decline did not illuminate reasons for this behaviour and there appears to be an Islamic renaissance occurring.

Lifestyle choices showed that not all of the women were choosing to wear the *hijab* as an expression of their Muslim identity, but Gidden’s (1991) discussion of lifestyle choices and society moving away from tradition with the influence of globalisation is not borne out by the wearers interviewed for this research. The non-wearers could be seen to be embracing a wider non-Muslim society, whereas those who wore the *hijab* were choosing to continue wearing traditional markers of their faith. The wearers were clearly aware of other women around the world, what they were wearing and the influence of fashion, but continued to wear the type of dress specified in the Qur’an and therefore globalisation does not significantly influence the choices made by this group of women. Again when applied to the categories of dress it can be seen that some of Giddens’(1991) ideas do correspond with the choices that the women make, but not all of them.
Contrary to lifestyle choices, habitus (Mahmood 2001) explains why women choose to wear the hijab and offers an important insight into the lives of the wearers and a deeper understanding of their feelings and motivations but it does not help in trying to explain why some Muslim women do not wear the hijab. All of the women interviewed for this research stated that they were Muslims and yet through individual choices some of the women, even when they knew the instructions found in the Qur’an felt that the wearing of the hijab is not a requirement. Therefore those women who were non-wearers of the hijab did not feel the need to express their inner feelings in this outward way.

Individualization can also be seen to be having an influence on these women who may have been influenced by family, friends and faith, but were not controlled by them. These women were all clear that the choices that they were making were their own and had the relative freedom to make their own choices regardless of their social class or economic stability, which was not asked about specifically. They were all clearly individuals with their own likes and dislikes, and were choosing aspects of modern life that conformed to their beliefs and the way that they saw the world. Individualization, like lifestyle choices, does explain why some Muslim women are choosing not to wear the hijab, but does not help to explain why Muslim women choose to wear the hijab until it is expanded to include the work of Smart and Shipman (2004) and then the benefits it has in helping to explain the wearing or not wearing of the hijab becomes clearer. From my research, and as noted by Smart and Shipman (2004) it can be seen that the wearers interviewed were having ‘…a ‘life of one’s own’’, but family, friends, faith and tradition were an important part of that. Therefore, the individualization debate put forward by Smart and Shipman (2004) is an important starting point in explaining why some women are choosing to put on the hijab and some are choosing not to.

This research could now be taken further by investigating whether this renewed interest in the wearing of the hijab and the reinterpretation of the Qur’an is the beginning of a schism within Islam or a revision of tenets. Commonalities could be examined such as: region, age, ethnicity, social economic background, religious teachers, cited Imams and education, in order to identify if this new movement is driven by social factors. A test would be to see if there are commonalities between
those who have looked at the instructions regarding dress and have made re-
interpretations that went against the traditional status quo. It would then be possible to
establish what is driving the behaviour of these women whether it was social
pressures; or a mix of social pressures and an internalised re-interpretation of the
religion which can be accommodated; or is it a shift in belief system and way of
interpreting previous guidance that some Muslims read and believe in a certain way
triggering a split/schism. As the majority of women interviewed for this research were
Sunni Muslims it would be interesting to explore if this resurgence in the wearing of
hijab is occurring in different groups within Sunni Islam, but also to see if it is
happening with Shi’a Muslim women.

7.10. Conclusion

In conclusion, my research demonstrates that Muslim women are all following their
own path, interpreting the scriptures for themselves to make their own choices as to
whether the hijab should be worn or not and at the same time some are holding on to
to their Islamic traditions. Many of the women were exploring the religion for
themselves with a new enthusiasm to ensure their own individual take on what had
been originally interpreted and were as a result wearing what they felt was the right
thing to wear. Their style of dress is their own choice, their own individual agency
and whether wearers or non-wearers of the hijab it is the women who are making up
their own minds.

Traditionally Muslim women were told by some scholars that they had to wear the
hijab and also told by others that they did not have to wear it. Now living in Britain
with the interplay between individualization and their faith, Muslim women are,
instead of taking on board these interpretations on faith, are looking for the answers
themselves. The women are feeling empowered to re-examine and potentially re-
interpret the tenets of their religion and are taking on a role that would not have been
traditionally theirs. They are making the interpretations themselves and as a result of
this some are accepting the teachings that back up the traditional point of view and are
agreeing with how it has traditionally been understood whereas other women believe
it is open to interpretation and as a result do not believe that they have to cover.
These women are investing time in *ijtihad*, and are moving the interpretation of their religion to something in which they feel they should invest. Almost a revolution in how traditional Muslim dress is being approached is happening amongst many Muslim women in Britain. According to Roald (2001, p.99) even though according to *Sunni* mainstream thought the gates of *ijtihad* have been closed since the ninth or tenth century with the Qur’an, the *Hadith* and the schools of law and interpretation being all that was needed for Muslims to live their lives, there is a new grass roots interpretation occurring. The women interviewed were very clear that they were reading the texts, analysing the interpretations and were ultimately making their own choices, not the *Imams* or the scholars and as such the women were carrying out a *neo-ijtihad*. Abou El Fadl (2006, p.x) a professor of Islamic law and jurisprudence when endorsing the work of Wadud (2006) explains how she is ‘a fully autonomous moral agent’ who has dedicated much of her work and research to analysing the text of the Qur’an and is in turn ‘reconceptualizing [sic] the relationship between a Muslim and her God’. Abou El Fadl (2006, p.xi) states that ‘In order for human agency to be a true exercise in autonomy and for the surrender to be meaningful, it is imperative that Muslims critically interrogate their texts, laws, customs, and thoughts’. This endorsement of Muslim women interpreting their own religion is something that will further empower those who feel it is their right and indeed duty to examine all aspects of their faith.

This re-invigoration and enthusiasm for re-interpreting the scriptures may well lead to a re-invention of the way Islam interacts with the non-Muslim world. The position of the Qur’an and the weight of Islamic tradition have been seen as absolute and the pressures from the force of community and the *Umma* have been entwined with that. An individual conscience version of *ijtihad* has started to emerge where some Muslim women are subtly reinterpreting the instructions, are coming up with their own individual point of view and are wearing what they think is right. There is a central pull at the centre of the religion that prevents most people from schism or renouncement, but the way in which the Muslim women interviewed for this research are emphasising reasoning and choice is interesting and new in its own right. What is particularly significant is that it is women who are doing this, as it wasn’t women who were traditionally the scholars within Islam and yet they feel that they are empowered to undertake this analysis and individual choice. According to Abou El Fadl (2006,
ijtihad’s ethics are ‘embodied by the meaning of the word itself, which is: to exert and exhaust oneself in the pursuit of thought and knowledge in search of the Divine will’.

According to Wadud (2006, p.3) ‘Muslim women’s engagement with issues of concern to women’s well-being in Muslim societies continues to increase’ and at this present time there is a ‘greater percentage of participants’. Wadud (2006, p.3) puts this down to a number of factors ‘including consciousness-raising, increased levels of education, … religious authority, and personal spiritual wholeness’.

In Britain this neo-ijtihad can be seen to be coming from the impulses within the Islamic tradition itself and the high value of the individual that comes from living in a society where women have the freedom to choose. As already stated in the findings, the mosques and the Women’s Associations were providing many of the women with an opportunity to explore their religion and learn about the instructions in the Qur’an and the debates surrounding the interpretations. Some of the women were using other resources available to them, including the internet, to discover for themselves the interpretations that were on offer. This resurgence in Islam that has been noted by other authors such as Wadud (2006) can definitely been seen amongst the women in Britain. This resurgence has not simply been a revival of traditional values amongst previous adherents but as also, seemingly, triggered a significant enthusiasm for re-examining aspects of Islamic teaching. Within Islam there is no mediator who can stand in for the women, no-one to say a blessing for them, and it can be seen that the individual choices made by the women were ultimately between their conscience and God.
References


Alibhai-Brown, Y. (2003) ‘Taking the wrap; In Europe, Muslim women are fighting for the right to wear it. In the Middle East, they’re fighting to throw it off. In Britain, it’s more popular – and political – than ever. So why all the fuss about a humble headscarf?’, The Independent (London, England), 23 October, p. 4.


White, S. (2003) ‘Forget fashion, this is freedom; The Muslim veil has become a hot political issue in France – but Stella White cannot see what the fuss is about. A Catholic from Kent, she explains the joys of the complete cover-up’, *Daily Telegraph* (London, England), 31 December, p.20.


### Appendix 1 – Sample table – phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code for Thesis</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>British Resident</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Student/ non-Student</th>
<th>Muslim by Birth/Convert/ Married into Religion</th>
<th>British/non-British</th>
<th>Long-term/Past/New wearer</th>
<th>Sect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Jatar (Arabian Gulf)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DA</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Yes?</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>Past wearer</td>
<td>Shia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DB</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Past wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BD</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Past wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>BG</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Convert/Revert</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>BH</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Morroccan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Convert/Revert</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>BH</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>French/Algerian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>BJ</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Convert/Revert</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Somalian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Shia by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>BK</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Convert/Revert</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>EE</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>EF</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Past wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>English/ Libyan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Morroccan/Grk/Austrian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>BL</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Convert/Revert</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>BM</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Morroccan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>New wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Morroccan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>EH</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>EI</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>AI</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>EJ</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>AK</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>EK</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>Morroccan</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>Non-British</td>
<td>Non-wearer</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>25 - 39</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>Muslim by birth</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 - Agenda for semi-structured interviews

Life Story so far

Do you consider yourself to be a Muslim?

Could you describe what you are wearing today?

Is this a new outfit?

Would you normally wear this outfit?

Where do you buy your clothes from?

Back to the Beginning

If wearing, do you always wear the hijab?

Was there a time in your life when you didn’t you wear it?

How old were you when you started to wear it?

If not wearing, do you ever wear the hijab?

Was there a time in your life when you always wore it?

How old were you when you decided not to wear it?

Daily Routine

What times of the week/day do you **not** wear the hijab?

Is there a time when you switch off?

How do you judge when to wear it and when not to wear it?

Is there a time when you can be excused from wearing the hijab?
Rules regarding *hijab*

Are there different types of Islamic dress and could you explain these differences?

Is the wearing of *hijab* for comfort or belief?

What is the reason for wearing this?

What persuades you to wear this?

What do you sight as the authority for wearing this?

If answers, in the *Qur’an*: Where would you find this, *surah* and *aya*?

Does everyone know this?

Have you checked it out?

Responses to the *hijab*

What responses do you get when you wear the *hijab*?

Do you feel more respected?

Do you receive any hostility?

Have you become more European for travelling, for e.g. if so, how did it feel?

Did you feel more secure?

Did you feel that people were looking at you?

Changes to the use of *hijab*

Has your dress changed at all recently?

Have you withdrawn or become more visible?

Has this been a deliberate change or has it been unintentional?

Has your religious behaviour changed over the past two years?

Has your faith in Islam become stronger due to these events?

Has your life changed in any other way?

What is your opinion of the Headscarf Ban in France?

Do you think Muslims will comply or react against it?
Background Information

Do you go out to work?

How would you describe your ethnic origin:

- British
- Pakistani
- Indian
- Bangladeshi
- African – North
- African – Other
- Chinese
- Caribbean
- Other

Do you consider yourself to be British?

Are you aged?

- Under 25
- 25-39
- 40+