

Muslims, South Asians, and the British Mainstream

A National Identity Crisis?

(Forthcoming, 2006, *West European Politics*)

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Abstract

Current popular opinion assumes that Muslims and South Asians in Britain develop anti-mainstream identities because they live in impoverished and segregated ghettos, participate in non-mainstream religions, and politically organize via ethnically and religiously motivated networks. This article uses survey data from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey to challenge each of those points. First, I show that Muslims and South Asians are almost as likely as whites to identify as British. Second, I argue that discrimination is more important than simple socio-economic difficulties for British identification. In addition, I claim that despite living in ethnically segregated neighborhoods and retaining ethnic and religious social and political networks, Muslims and South Asians have actively built integrated networks, have trust in mainstream political institutions, and are committed to being a part of the larger British community.

Since the late 1980s ethnic minority politics in Britain has shifted from “black”¹ politics of inclusion and equality to Muslim and South Asian demands for distinct religious and cultural rights (Ansari 2005).² Some commentators link this rise of Muslim and South Asian politics to their growing economic and social isolation, and use the summer 2001 riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford and the recent London terrorist attacks on July 7 and July 21, 2005 as examples of the dangers of poor, alienated, religiously and politically radicalized Muslims and South Asians.³

Public discourse claims that Muslims and South Asians are alienated from mainstream Britain because they live in impoverished ethnic ghettos, participate in non-mainstream religions, and politically organize via ethnically and religiously motivated networks (Leiken 2005, Reiss 2005). However, despite the availability of survey data there have not been many statistical analyses that analyze the motivations behind Muslim and South Asian British identification.

This article attempts to remedy that oversight, and makes four contributions to the literature on national identity among ethnic minorities. The first contribution is empirical and states that Muslims and South Asians are only slightly less likely to feel that they belong to Britain than whites, and in fact more likely to feel that they belong than Caribbeans, an ethnic minority considered more culturally integrated. Secondly, I critique the focus on objective socio-economic outcomes to explain ethnic minority alienation without considering the more nuanced subjective dynamics of perceived

discrimination. Thirdly, I argue that there is not necessarily a binary tradeoff between identification with the national mainstream and involvement in ethnic and religious communities. As such I show that despite retaining ethnic and religious networks, Muslims and South Asians have also actively built integrated networks and consider themselves part of the larger British community. Finally, I critique claims that Muslims and South Asians have hijacked the British political process for their own ends by showing that they believe in mainstream political institutions and are more likely to identify as British as a result of political participation.

This article has four parts. First I review the literature on British national identity among ethnic minorities, demonstrating that it does not explain relatively high levels of British identification among Muslims and South Asians. Second, I introduce the data, measures, and methods used to analyze identification among Muslims and South Asians. Third I present regression analysis results that show the standard explanations of South Asian and Muslim British identification mistakenly focus on alienation and ignore the constructive elements of identification that already exist. A brief conclusion summarizes the main findings and suggests implications for future research.

Literature Review

Before reviewing the literature on British national identity among ethnic minorities I will give a very brief background of Muslim and South Asian migration to Britain. Following World War II Britain received large and diverse flows of migration in

response to labor shortages. Caribbeans were the first to arrive during the 1950s and enjoyed relative social integration due to familiarity with British culture, the English language, and the Christian religion (Nanton 1999). Indians were the first South Asians to arrive in large numbers, and enjoyed relative economic success due to higher education and skill levels upon arrival and their likelihood of culturally adapting to British society because of their moderate Hindu or secular tendencies (Heath and McMahan 2005). In the 1970s Bangladeshis and Pakistanis began to arrive in large numbers and eventually became the majority of Britain's Muslim population (Hiro 1991; 2001 UK Census).⁴ Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants tended to have less education than previous waves of Caribbeans and Indians, and because the British economy was not as strong in the 1970s and 80s as it was in the 50s and 60s, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis found social mobility difficult and remain the poorest ethnic minority groups in Britain (Heath and McMahan 2005). Therefore, while research on ethnic minority alienation in Britain has studied all South Asians, Muslims have received the most focus, especially Bangladeshis and Pakistanis.

General academic literature assumes that ethnic minority immigrant identification with the host country is a function of three main factors: socio-economic status, social engagement with the mainstream culture, and political/civic participation (Alba and Nee 2003). According to these arguments improved socio-economic status will increase the likelihood of identifying with the nation as life becomes materially better in the host nation. Social engagement with the mainstream culture will increase the likelihood of identifying with the nation through social and familial relationships. Political and civic

participation will increase the likelihood of identifying with the nation through acceptance of national symbols, institutions, and tangible involvement and investment in the community.

When this general literature on ethnic minority identification is applied to Britain it is typically argued that poor socio-economic outcomes, weak social engagement with the mainstream culture, and ethnically based political and civic participation reduce identification with the nation for Muslims and South Asians. However, I argue that a better understanding of British identification among Muslims and South Asians would focus on the complex ways in which individuals balance ethnic, religious, and mainstream networks and ideologies.

Arguments about the importance of socio-economic status for ethnic minority identification claim that while Indians have been economically successful and are therefore likely to identify as British, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis face severe socio-economic disadvantages that have led to alienation from the British mainstream (Modood and Berthoud 1997). However, despite the fact that Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are clearly the most economically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country,⁵ the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey shows that Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are more likely to feel British than Indians. In addition, regression analysis will show that measures of socio-economic status are not statistically significant predictors of British identification for Muslims and South Asians. While socio-economic outcomes clearly impact one's

evaluation of society, I argue that perception of discrimination is more important for identity than socio-economic status per se.

Analysis of social engagement with the mainstream culture claims that Muslims and South Asians live in ethnically and religiously isolated ghettos where their friends, spouses, and business associates are all of the same ethnicity and religion, which in turn breeds ethnically and religiously isolated identities (Ousley 2001, Samad 1992).

However, close analysis of the Citizenship Survey reveals that ethnic isolation and religiosity are insignificant predictors of British identification for Muslims and South Asians. While spatial segregation is clearly an important aspect of identity formation, I argue that cross-ethnic links (which coexist with ethnic and religious networks) are more important for membership and engagement in a broader national community.

Analysis of political and civic participation claims that relatively high levels of engagement among Muslims and South Asians perpetuate isolated communities and reduce their identification with Britain. These arguments break into three main strands. The first argues that Muslim and South Asian political activity in Britain is based on South Asian kinship networks and is often the offshoot of political movements in South Asia (most notably the Tablighi Jamaat movement in Pakistan) and therefore does not promote British identity but rather reinforces ethnic difference (Kepel 1997, Sikand 1998). The second strand argues that Muslim and South Asian political and civic activity has relied on mobilizing districts with high percentages of Muslim and South Asian residents to subvert policy to their ethnic specific demands, often by taking over local

chapters of the Labour Party with no regard for Labour Party platforms, a practice referred to as 'ethnic entryism' (Fielding and Geddes 1998). A third line argues that high levels of engagement are based on Muslim identities and seek increasing rights and recognition as Muslims, not as Britons (Koopmans and Statham 2004).

My paper argues that while ethnic and religious-specific issues are important for Muslim and South Asian organization in Britain they do not preclude identification with the larger British community. As such I show that British identification among Muslims and South Asians is positively influenced by political and civic participation as well as by ideological belief in mainstream political institutions.

To summarize, the current academic literature generates the following four hypotheses about British national identification among Muslims and South Asians:

H1: Muslims and South Asians are less likely than whites to identify as British.

H2: Low socio-economic status will negatively impact British national identification for Muslims and South Asians.

H3: Social and cultural isolation will negatively impact British national identification for Muslims and South Asians.

H4: High political and civic engagement will negatively impact British national identification for Muslims and South Asians.

My paper modifies all four hypotheses. To question H1 I present survey results where Muslims and South Asians are almost as likely as whites to feel that they belong to Britain. My response to H2 is that while socio-economic outcomes are important for understanding national identification patterns, perceptions of unfair discrimination are more significant contributors to alienation than the socio-economic outcomes alone. To modify H3 I argue that while social and cultural integration outcomes are relevant for understanding national identification patterns among ethnic minorities, ethnic and religious networks are not anathema to national cohesion and can coexist with productive mainstream bridges. To counter H4 I argue that high levels of Muslim and South Asian political and civic engagement are important for building rather than destroying identification with the British mainstream. Furthermore, Muslims and South Asians have high levels of trust in mainstream political institutions, which also promotes positive identification with the British mainstream.

Data, Measures, and Methods

The data for my analysis come from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey, which was designed to provide information for the Home Office's public policy priorities towards local community empowerment. There are three main advantages to using the 2003 Citizenship Survey for my analysis.

The first advantage of the Citizenship Survey is its wealth of questions on the relevant variables for my analysis: national identity, socio-economic status, social and cultural interactions, and political and civic engagement. Secondly, it is the most recent survey to provide detailed data for ethnic minorities in Britain. Other common data sources for ethnic minorities in Britain are the Labour Force Survey and the National Survey of Ethnic Minorities. However, while the Labour Force Survey is produced four times each year, it focuses on socio-economic variables and has none of the attitudinal and social behavior variables relevant to my analysis. And, while the National Survey of Ethnic Minorities has relevant attitudinal and social behavior questions, it was last conducted in 1993-94. The third advantage to the Citizenship Survey is its relatively large sample size of ethnic minorities. The Citizenship Survey provides a representative sample of 9,600 individuals 16 years or older, as well as an ethnic minority booster sample of 4,600 ethnic minorities aged 16 years or older.⁶

I will now briefly discuss the Citizenship Survey measures for my central variables. More details on can be found in the Appendix. The dependent variable, British identification, is measured by the question: “How strongly do you belong to Britain?” with the response categories: “0- Not At All Strongly, 1-Not Very Strongly, 2-Fairly Strongly, 3-Very Strongly”.

The first category of independent variables, socio-economic status, has two sets of measures: education and occupational attainment. Education is measured by two

variables, the first of which (“Education”) orders the highest academic qualifications received: “0- No Qualifications, 1- Foreign and other qualifications, 2- GCSE grades D-E or equivalent, 3- GCSE grades A-C or equivalent, 4- GCE A-levels or equivalent, 5- Above A-level below degree, 6- Degree or equivalent”. Foreign qualifications that have no equivalents in Britain are typically placed below GCSE because they will not be highly valued in the British labour market. However, because many ethnic minorities born outside of the UK are likely to have been trained abroad, to directly test the relevance of foreign qualifications I also include a dummy variable that measures whether the respondent has foreign qualifications or not.

Occupational attainment is measured by five dummy variables. “Working” measures whether the respondent is employed or not. “Professional” measures whether the respondent is employed in higher/lower managerial and professional occupations or not. “Intermediate” measures whether the respondent is employed in intermediate occupations and as small employers or not. “Routine” measures whether the respondent is employed in routine occupations or not. “Full Student” measures whether the respondent is a full time student or not. Because the multiple regression analysis will not work with each occupational category included as a dummy variable, I have not included a dummy for semi-routine occupations.

To measure the second cluster of independent variables, social and cultural engagement with the mainstream, the Citizenship Survey has a number of questions about ethnic integration and religious behavior. Residential spatial segregation is

measured by the question “Are people in local area of the same ethnicity?” Ethnic diversity of personal contacts is measured by the question “Do you regularly meet and talk with people of different ethnic origin to your own?” Finally, religious activity is measured by the question “Do you actively practice religion?”

To measure political and civic engagement the Citizenship Survey has questions about political and civic activities. To measure political activity I use the question “Did you vote in the last election?” and to measure civic activity I use a variable that combines “Have you contacted officials in the past 12 months?” and “Have you attended a rally, demonstration, or signed a petition in the past 12 months?”

Finally, three variables test the hypotheses that I propose about the impact of perceived discrimination and trust in mainstream political institutions. Perception of discrimination is measured by the question “How would the courts treat you, better, the same, or worse than other races?”⁷ Trust in mainstream political institutions is measured by two questions: “Do you trust Parliament?” and “Do you trust the local council?”

Control variables for age, gender, and country of birth were also included, and to analyze the impact of the independent variables on British national identity among Muslims and South Asians I conduct a series of ordered logistic regressions. Ordered logistic regression is appropriate when the response variable (in this case “How strongly do you belong to Britain?”) consists of several categories that can be ranked in order, but for which the distance between values is unknown. This applies to the responses on the

dependent variable (“Not At All Strongly” “Not Very Strongly” “Fairly Strongly” “Very Strongly”), which are in ascending order of identification but not necessarily equally spaced.⁸ The regression coefficients I report measure the impact of independent variables on the likelihood of responding more positively or more negatively in the categories of British identification.

Results: A Crisis Exaggerated

Table one shows results for responses to the question “How strongly do you belong to Britain?” Responses in the category “Very strongly” are more positive for whites (52.97%) than Muslims (44.61%), Indians (46.55%), Pakistanis (44.85%), or Bangladeshis (44.98%), suggesting that whites are the group most likely to have a very strong attachment to Britain. However, when the two positive categories (“Fairly Strongly” and “Very Strongly”) are combined, Muslims and South Asians are essentially equal to whites in positive identification with British nationality: 86.70% of whites belong either “fairly” or “very” strongly to Britain, compared to 85.97% of Muslims, 85.95% of Indians, 86.38% of Pakistanis, and 86.85% of Bangladeshis. These results make one question the first hypothesis that Muslims and South Asians are less likely than whites to identify as British, and they encourage skepticism towards the notion of a national identification crisis among Muslims and South Asians in Britain.

‘Table 1 about here’.

As table one shows, Muslims and South Asians not only have similar levels of British identification as whites, they are also more likely to feel British than Caribbeans, a group generally considered more culturally integrated. While recent research shows a troubling trend of growing alienation among Caribbeans (especially political alienation, see Goulbourne 2005, Maxwell 2005), they are still considered the most integrated ethnic minority in Britain because of higher intermarriage rates with the white majority,⁹ the fact that Caribbeans are more likely to speak English, more likely to be Christian, and less likely to be racially harassed, compared to South Asians who are less likely to speak English, more likely to be Hindu or Muslim, and are more likely to be the object of racial harassment.¹⁰ The fact that Muslims and South Asians are more likely to identify as British than the more culturally integrated Caribbeans suggests that national identification is a flexible concept not necessarily at odds with non-Christian and non-English cultural practices, and, that Muslims and South Asians feel more integrated than many observers claim.

However, even if Muslims and South Asians are not as alienated from British national identity as commonly assumed, there is still the question of what factors make Muslims and South Asians feel more or less British. Table two presents ordered logistic regression results for the dependent variable: “How strongly do you belong to Britain?” For each ethnic group two models are presented. Model A tests the importance of socio-economic, social and cultural integration, political and civic participation, and assorted demographic variables. Model B adds variables for perceived discrimination and trust in mainstream political institutions. Separating these two models is useful because it allows

me to first test the importance of the “objective” general literature integration measures before arguing for the importance of my attitudinal variables. For example, one could argue that people with high socio-economic status are likely to have higher levels of trust or lower levels of perceived discrimination, and if high trust or low perceived discrimination lead to British identification then socio-economic status would have an indirect influence on British identification that was subsumed by the trust and discrimination variables. However, by separating the two models I first conduct a rigorous test of the variables emphasized in the general literature before ruling them out as explanations.

‘Table 2 about here’.

Table two encourages us to question arguments that low socio-economic status produces anti-British sentiments among Muslims and South Asians. Numerous measures of occupational categories are statistically insignificant, including the most important dummy variables for employed/not employed and routine occupations, which directly measure unfavorable socio-economic outcomes and show that low socio-economic status is a statistically insignificant predictor of British identification among Muslims and South Asians. Being a full-time student is significant for Muslims and Pakistanis, making them less likely to identify as British, but this is most likely related to age effects, as age is positively significant and students are likely to be young. In addition, while education is statistically significant for Indians, it does not support arguments that low educational outcomes reduce British identification but rather shows that higher education has a

negative influence on British identification among Indians. These findings do not suggest that Indians are especially alienated but rather place them in line with whites, for whom higher education also reduces British identification.¹¹

Table two also presents a number of variables to test the importance of social and cultural isolation on British national identification among Muslims and South Asians, and shows that the obvious formal indicators are less important than the subtle measures of how social and cultural integration is experienced. For example, the media consistently claim that religious activity and ethnically segregated ghettos have led to Muslim and South Asian isolation from the British mainstream (Leiken 2005, Reiff 2005). Yet both religion and ethnic concentration of neighborhood are statistically insignificant across all groups. While ethnic concentration is insignificant, diverse ethnic relationships is positively significant for Muslims and Bangladeshis, showing that ethnic minorities can simultaneously live in an ethnic community and reach out to mainstream society. These results suggest that ethnically segregated communities and religious practices can coexist with diverse ethnic interactions and significant attachment to the broader British community.

The fact that ethnically segregated communities do not preclude significant diverse ethnic interactions suggests that Muslims and South Asians are not as isolated as commonly assumed (Simpson 2004: 666), and gives further credence to the notion that existing ghettos are not formed through intense desires to remain within one culture but rather are the most resource-deprived parts of Britain formed as a result of Muslims and

South Asians not having enough resources to move elsewhere (Peach 1998). Furthermore, because South Asians and (most) Muslims are ethnic minorities, by definition they are more likely than the white majority to work, socialize, and have regular interactions with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds: 77% of whites in the Citizenship Survey claimed to have regular contact and conversations with people of different ethnicities, compared to 95% of Indians, 94% of Pakistanis, 95% of Bangladeshis, and 94% of Muslims. These results suggest that stigmatizing Muslim and South Asian ethnic and religious communities undervalues how ethnic and religious communities can coexist with identification with the broader nation.

The final set of explanations favored by the literature is that high levels of political and civic engagement among Muslims and South Asians are the result of ethnically and religiously based mobilization and therefore perpetuate ethnically and religiously segregated identities (Kepel 1994).

Arguments about religiously segregated political identities draw on the observation that since the 1980s influential Muslim community leaders have inspired high turnout rates among Muslims to elect them as local councilors (Ansari 2005, Husband 2002, Mustafa 2001). These Muslim leaders maintain their support in the community by lobbying government and extracting various Muslim-specific concessions, ranging from mother-tongue teaching in schools and Hallal meals in school cafeterias to mosque contracts for various tasks of local government service delivery (Joly 1987, pp.19-23; Kepel 1994, pp. 157-58). In addition, in recent years Muslim politics have

gained further salience in opposition to Blair's support for the US-led war in Iraq (Garbaye 2005, pp. 10-11).

However, table two shows that contrary to being a negative influence on national identity, vote turnout is positively significant for British identification among Muslims. While the 2003 Citizenship Survey does not allow for fine-grained analysis of Muslim reactions to specific political events, it was conducted well after the supposed rise of Muslim politics in the late 1980s, and right in the middle of the debate over the 2003 War in Iraq, yet it still shows that political activity among Muslims positively contributes to British national identity. A recent survey conducted by the Islamic Human Rights Commission also shows that while 44% of Muslims were politicized as Muslims and felt the British government's policies were not favorable towards Muslims (especially the lack of legal protection from discrimination), 41% of Muslims also felt a strong sense of belonging to Britain (Ameli and Merali 2004: 42-6).

Arguments about ethnically segregated political identities use the term "ethnic entryism" to describe ethnic and kinship networks that allegedly hijack British politics for ethnically separate agendas (Fielding and Geddes 1998). However, the fact that vote turnout and civic activity have a statistically insignificant impact on British identification among Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians suggests that their high levels of political and civic activity do not necessarily lead to ethnically separate identities.

The results of Model A therefore encourage us to doubt the common claims that socio-economic difficulties, social and cultural segregation, and high levels of political activity are hindrances to British identification among Muslims and South Asians. Model B presents three additional attitudinal variables to test my arguments about the importance of perceived discrimination and trust in mainstream political institutions.

While Model A showed that socio-economic variables alone are insignificant predictors of British national identity for Muslims and South Asians, I argue that material difficulties are still important for Muslim and South Asian British identity as they relate to perceived discrimination. Model B in table two shows that perceived discrimination is negatively significant for Muslim and Pakistani British national identity.¹² This therefore leads us to believe that while socio-economic outcomes alone do not necessarily impact identification with the nation, the manner in which socio-economic outcomes were achieved is important and when Muslims and Pakistanis consider outcomes unfair and discriminatory they are less likely to feel British.

There are two possible rebuttals to this distinction between perceived discrimination and socio-economic outcomes. The first is that perceived discrimination cannot be separated from socio-economic outcomes as an explanatory variable because people with low socio-economic status are more likely to suffer discrimination and ethnic minorities are more likely to have low socio-economic status. The second counterargument then claims that if socio-economic status is correlated with perceived discrimination the regression coefficient for perceived discrimination will include effects

from socio-economic status. Therefore a statistically insignificant coefficient for socio-economic status would not allow us to rule out its substantive importance.

The above two counterarguments may initially appear plausible, but upon closer inspection they do not impact my claims. First, while one may assume that ethnic minorities with low socio-economic status are more likely to suffer discrimination, a recent survey of 1125 Muslims in Britain conducted by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) does not show a significant relationship between level of education and degree of discrimination, except in the case of British Muslims who had not obtained the GCSE, who were less likely to experience discrimination (Ameli, Elahi, Merali 2004: 48). In response to the second counterargument my methodology runs separate analyses to show that socio-economic outcomes are statistically insignificant even without the potentially correlated discrimination variable. Therefore we should not automatically assume that low socio-economic status leads to disaffection with the mainstream, but rather consider how discriminatory experiences shape material outcomes and alienation, across socio-economic levels.

Model B also tests the importance of political trust in mainstream institutions and shows that Muslims and South Asians are ideologically invested in mainstream British politics. Table two shows trust in Parliament as positively significant at $p < .001$ for British identification among Muslims and Indians while trust in the local council is significant at $p < .05$ for Indians.¹³ While levels of political trust have been declining across the Western world in recent decades (King, Nye, and Zelikow 1997), tables four

and five show that Muslims and South Asians are much more likely than whites to trust in Parliament and the local council. Only 4% of whites have “a lot” of trust in Parliament, compared to 16% of Muslims, 14% of Indians, 12% of Pakistanis, and 23% of Bangladeshis. For trust in the local council only 6% of whites have “a lot” compared to 18% of Muslims, 12% of Indians, 15% of Pakistanis, and 23% of Bangladeshis.

‘Table 4 about here’.

‘Table 5 about here’.

This Muslim and South Asian optimism can be pessimistically interpreted as a function of being relatively new to Britain and coming from countries where politics were less transparent and less effective in comparison. However, regardless of the cause it indicates that Muslims and South Asians are in fact engaging mainstream British identity and institutions, and not as alienated as the media would have us believe.

The final demographic variables not yet discussed are “Gender” “Country of Birth” and “Age”. The fact that gender is insignificant for British identification across all groups suggests that while males and females face different challenges in life, those differences do not appear significant for predicting variation in British identification once numerous control variables are considered.

“Country of Birth” measures the importance of being born in Britain for national identity. Standard literature argues that naturalized first generation migrants should have very high levels of identification with the host country because they have actively chosen to migrate, while the second generation will feel lost and not fully accepted in their country of birth, yet also without ties to the parents’ culture (Gans 1979, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In addition, recent arguments about segmented assimilation that were formed to explain alienated identities among Latin Americans in the US (Portes and Zhou 1993) have been applied to Muslims and South Asians in Britain, claiming that the second generation is less likely to feel British than the first generation because of increasing socio-economic difficulties and dissatisfaction (Modood and Berthoud 1997).

The Citizenship Survey confirms that Muslims, Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis born in Britain are less likely to identify as British than those born elsewhere, which suggests that there are different dynamics between the two generations concerning identity formation.¹⁴ However, because “Country of Birth” is a statistically insignificant predictor of British identification across all four groups, the mere fact of being born abroad or in Britain does not appear significant. In addition, because socio-economic and spatial segregation variables are not significant, the above explanation of segmented assimilation also does not seem plausible. A more likely explanation lies with the positively significant variable “Age”, which does not directly measure years spent in Britain, but does suggest that regardless of country of birth or socio-economic status, the more time spent in the community the more likely one is to feel British. This finding also occurs in the IHRC study where time spent in Britain is positively associated with loyalty

to the nation (Ameli and Merali 2004: 42). This reinforces my earlier argument about Muslims and South Asians being civically and ideologically invested in Britain.

In summary, contrary to claims that Muslims and South Asians are alienated from British mainstream society they are almost as likely as whites to feel that they belong to Britain. In addition, the above results suggest that claims about low socio-economic status, ethnically and religiously isolated communities, and ethnically and religiously motivated political participation negatively influencing British national identification among Muslims and South Asians should be revised. Instead I argue that it is crucial to understand the nuances of how people experience socio-economic difficulties and ethnically and religiously based networks. For example, while socio-economic difficulties do not appear to affect British identification, perceptions of discrimination do have a negative impact, suggesting that the unfair nature of discrimination is more problematic than socio-economic difficulties alone. The results also show that ethnically segregated neighborhoods are not a significant influence on British identification, while cross-ethnic relationships are, suggesting that Muslims and South Asians can balance ethnic and religious networks with connections to mainstream society. Further evidence of Muslim and South Asian engagement with mainstream British society is the positive impact of vote turnout and the high levels of political trust, showing that Muslims and South Asians are balancing any ethnic and religious difficulties with a firm commitment to mainstream values and practices.

Conclusion

This article claims that arguments about alienated Muslims and South Asians in Britain are exaggerated and in fact Muslims and South Asians are almost as likely to identify as British as whites. In addition, factors such as socio-economic difficulties and ethnically and religiously segregated networks that supposedly contribute to Muslim and South Asian alienation have been shown to be insignificant. While it is true that Muslims and South Asians face a variety of difficulties in Britain based on low economic resources and spatial segregation into ghettos, I claim it is important to understand the complex ways in which Muslims and South Asians experience these environments. Specifically I argue that discrimination is more harmful than simple socio-economic difficulties for British identification, and despite retaining ethnic and religious social and political networks, Muslims and South Asians have also actively built integrated networks and consider themselves part of the larger British community.

Recent academic work supports this focus on the complexity of identity formation, and has focused on the diversity of Muslim and South Asian experiences in Britain (Werbner 2001), the impact of various cultural and historical influences on British Muslim identities (Glynn 2002), as well as the political strategies behind multiple Muslim and South Asian identities (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins 2002).

Future research should probe more deeply what “belonging to Britain” means for Muslims and South Asians, as current identity research examines how common identities

usually mean different things to different people (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, McDermott 2005). A recent survey by commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) shows that people identify with a range of characteristics (geography, symbols, people, values and attitudes, cultural habits and behavior, citizenship, language, achievements) when they construct their British identity (Ethnos 2005). In addition, the CRE survey argues that while religion and ethnicity are important for Muslim and South Asian identity, many respondents did not feel those categories conflicted with also feeling British. Such research should be continued and expanded, as understanding exactly how Muslims and South Asians consider themselves part of the larger mainstream British community offers important insight on how this unity can be preserved and deepened, and how its weakening can be avoided.

Appendix: Explanation of Variables

Dependent Variable

British ID: “How strongly do you belong to Britain?” 0- Not At All Strongly, 1-Not Very Strongly, 2- Fairly Strongly, 3-Very Strongly”.

Education Variables

Education: “Highest academic qualifications received” 0- No Qualifications, 1- Foreign and other qualifications, 2- GSCE grades D-E or equivalent, 3- GCSE grades A-C or equivalent, 4- GCE A-levels or equivalent, 5- Above A-level below degree, 6- Degree or equivalent.

Foreign Educ: “Do you have foreign academic qualifications?” 0- No, 1- Yes.

Occupational Variables

Working: 0- Not Employed, 1-Employed.

Professional: 0- Not higher/lower managerial and professions, 1: Higher/lower managerial and professions.

Intermediate: 0- Not intermediate occupations/small employers, 1: Intermediate occupations/small employers.

Routine: 0- Not routine occupations, 1- Routine occupations

Full Student: “Are you a full time student?” 0- No, 1- Yes.

Social and Cultural Integration Variables

Ethnic Area: “Are people in the neighborhood the same ethnicity?” 0- All the same, 1- Not the same.

Ethnic Relate: “Do you regularly meet and talk with people of different ethnic origins?” 0- No, 1-Yes.

Religious: “Do you actively practice religion?” 0-No, 1-Yes.

Assorted Demographic Variables

Born in UK: "What country were you born in?" 0- Not the United Kingdom, 1- United Kingdom

Age: "How old are you?" 0- 16-24 years old, 1- 25-34 years old, 2- 35-44 years old, 3- 45-54 years old, 4- 55-64 years old, 5- 65-74 years old, 6- 75-84 years old, 7- 85 years and older.

Gender: 0- Female, 1- Male.

Political Integration Variables

Vote Turnout: "Did you vote in the last general or local election?" 0- No, 1-Yes.

Civic Partic.: "Have you contacted officials, attended a rally, demonstration, or signed a petition in the past 12 months?" 0- No, 1- Yes.

Subjective Attitudinal Variables

Discrimination: "How would the courts treat you?" 0- I would be treated better than other races, 1- I would be treated the same as other races, 2- I would be treated worse than other races.

Trust Council: "Do you trust the local council?" 0- Not At All, 1- Not Very Much, 2- A Fair Amount, 3- A lot.

Trust Parliam.: "Do you trust Parliament?" 0- Not At All, 1- Not Very Much, 2- A Fair Amount, 3- A lot.

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Table 1: “How Strongly Do You Belong To Britain?”

	Whites	Muslims	Indians	Pakistanis	Bengalis	Caribbeans	Africans
Not At All Strongly	2.91%	3.26%	1.77%	1.89%	3.35%	5.60%	5.63%
Not Very Strongly	10.39%	11.77%	12.28%	10.74%	9.81%	15.34%	19.79%
Fairly Strongly	33.73%	40.36%	39.40%	42.53%	41.87%	39.53%	41.10%
Very Strongly	52.97%	44.61%	46.55%	44.85%	44.98%	39.53%	33.49%
Total N	8287	1504	1132	689	418	893	657

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Note: Core and minority ethnic boost samples, weighted percentages, unweighted respondents

Table 2: Ordered Logistic Regressions for “How strongly do you belong to Britain?”

	Muslims		Indians		Pakistanis		Bangladeshis	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Education	-.035 (.032)	-.013 (.034)	-.091* (.038)	-.103* (.040)	.008 (.049)	.037 (.052)	-.083 (.062)	-.028 (.065)
Foreign Educ.	.035 (.193)	.033 (.206)	-.036 (.246)	-.188 (.266)	.241 (.289)	.015 (.304)	.020 (.400)	.079 (.420)
Working	-.217 (.166)	-.288 (.175)	.095 (.215)	.113 (.226)	-.326 (.253)	-.386 (.267)	.331 (.319)	.290 (.337)
Professional	-.082 (.201)	-.007 (.209)	-.164 (.195)	-.012 (.205)	-.406 (.295)	-.381 (.307)	-.578 (.416)	-.591 (.432)
Intermediate	-.062 (.187)	.024 (.197)	.012 (.201)	-.019 (.216)	-.169 (.259)	-.038 (.276)	.043 (.353)	-.005 (.367)
Routine	.011 (.196)	.090 (.204)	.305 (.235)	.384 (.251)	-.029 (.289)	-.077 (.300)	.106 (.399)	.227 (.419)
Full Student	-.511 (.316)	-.739* (.331)	.177 (.420)	.259 (.431)	-.719 (.465)	-1.27* (.503)	.049 (.615)	.208 (.624)
Ethnic Area	.242 (.236)	.136 (.246)	.040 (.317)	.035 (.334)	.174 (.359)	.111 (.374)	.537 (.379)	.348 (.398)
Ethnic Relate	.527* (.238)	.591* (.256)	-.072 (.337)	.101 (.364)	-.014 (.328)	.187 (.347)	1.94*** (.532)	1.63** (.564)
Religious			-.109 (.153)	-.237 (.161)	-.292 (.241)	-.371 (.252)	-.272 (.297)	-.118 (.305)
Gender	-.017 (.121)	.078 (.126)	.126 (.130)	.168 (.138)	-.154 (.182)	.037 (.191)	-.091 (.239)	-.078 (.248)
Age	.170*** (.048)	.149** (.051)	.169** (.061)	.162* (.065)	.181* (.071)	.189* (.074)	.195* (.092)	.184 (.098)
Born in UK	-.006 (.154)	.106 (.160)	.045 (.176)	.049 (.183)	-.154 (.208)	-.045 (.218)	-.168 (.339)	-.171 (.346)
Vote Turnout	.364** (.133)	.347* (.142)	.228 (.162)	.219 (.169)	.187 (.196)	.149 (.212)	.076 (.297)	-.010 (.346)
Civic Partic.	.173 (.117)	.199 (.123)	.106 (.132)	.131 (.138)	.218 (.174)	.145 (.186)	-.109 (.224)	-.093 (.240)
Discrimination		-.495** (.182)		-.252 (.200)		-.735** (.262)		-.721 (.382)
Trust Council		.133 (.082)		.215* (.101)		.202 (.116)		.175 (.153)
Trust Parliam.		.293*** (.077)		.361*** (.095)		.199 (.113)		.195 (.142)
Cut Point 1	-2.82 (.319)	-1.70 (.385)	-.405 (.522)	-2.94 (.582)	-4.62 (.583)	-3.17 (.646)	-1.90 (.694)	-.773 (.849)
Cut Point 2	-1.01 (.277)	.203 (.349)	-1.73 (.453)	-.549 (.519)	-2.21 (.458)	-.752 (.541)	.285 (.649)	.861 (.810)
Cut Point 3	1.04 (.275)	2.34 (.355)	.386 (.449)	1.65 (.522)	.053 (.445)	1.59 (.543)	1.97 (.660)	.320 (.833)
Pseudo R2	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.05
N	1214	1117	932	864	593	549	348	320

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Note: Each cell gives the estimated coefficients with standard errors below in parentheses,

*=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

The “Religious” variable not included for Muslims because by definition 100% of Muslims are religious and therefore there is no variation to be estimated.

Table 3: Ordered Logistic Regressions for “How strongly do you belong to Britain?”

	Whites		Caribbeans		Africans	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
Education	-.061*** (.014)	-.063*** (.014)	-.067 (.041)	-.045 (.043)	-.048 (.050)	-.036 (.053)
Foreign Educ.	-.033 (.126)	-.111 (.129)	.304 (.334)	.445 (.354)	-.265 (.377)	-.080 (.406)
Working	.163 (.137)	.177 (.140)	.305 (.278)	.177 (.292)	-.386 (.269)	-.420 (.279)
Professional	-.120 (.067)	-.143* (.069)	-.425* (.205)	-.299 (.213)	-.259 (.245)	-.100 (.255)
Intermediate	-.148* (.071)	-.161* (.073)	-.385 (.220)	-.364 (.228)	-.262 (.298)	-.238 (.317)
Routine	.009 (.086)	.009 (.088)	-.585* (.236)	-.621* (.249)	-.088 (.341)	-.079 (.363)
Full Student	.257 (.285)	.301 (.288)	.339 (.664)	-.034 (.665)	-.717 (.467)	-.774 (.565)
Ethnic Area	.039 (.050)	.038 (.052)	.475 (.593)	.226 (.603)	1.22 (.663)	.956 (.795)
Ethnic Relate	.044 (.066)	.022 (.068)	.794 (.554)	.708 (.580)	.728 (.639)	.953 (.673)
Religious	.207** (.062)	.189** (.063)	.101 (.158)	.075 (.164)	.092 (.224)	.061 (.235)
Gender	-.025 (.049)	-.018 (.049)	.082 (.158)	.068 (.165)	-.036 (.176)	-.092 (.184)
Age	.157*** (.019)	.182*** (.019)	.274*** (.077)	.267** (.079)	.174* (.079)	.143 (.082)
Born in UK	.554*** (.122)	.623*** (.127)	-.016 (.092)	.179 (.199)	-.112 (.239)	.260 (.260)
Vote Turnout	.161** (.058)	.083 (.059)	.186 (.166)	.249 (.173)	.694*** (.185)	.718*** (.194)
Civic Partic.	-.044 (.049)	-.036 (.049)	.076 (.149)	.087 (.154)	-.030 (.179)	.071 (.189)
Discrimination		.100 (.051)		-.593** (.175)		-.364 (.230)
Trust Council		.182*** (.036)		-.014 (.109)		.468** (.137)
Trust Parliam.		.310*** (.036)		.465*** (.111)		.238 (.121)
Cut Point 1	-2.48 (.202)	-1.98 (.219)	-1.44 (.632)	-.628 (.689)	-2.42 (.704)	-.675 (.769)
Cut Point 2	-.817 (.193)	-.285 (.211)	.156 (.622)	1.04 (.683)	-.409 (.679)	1.33 (.755)
Cut Point 3	1.05 (.193)	.162 (.212)	2.03 (.627)	2.99 (.693)	1.55 (.683)	3.44 (.770)
Pseudo R2	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.07
N	6579	6371	691	654	503	468

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Note: Each cell gives the estimated coefficients with standard errors below in parentheses,

*=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

Table 4: “How Much Do You Trust Parliament?”

	Whites	Muslims	Indians	Pakistanis	Bengalis
A Lot	4%	16%	14%	12%	23%
A Fair Amount	31%	39%	44%	38%	36%
Not V. Much	44%	30%	30%	32%	29%
Not At All	21%	15%	12%	18%	12%
N	8203	1433	1082	667	395

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Table 5: “How Much Do You Trust The Local Council?”

	Whites	Muslims	Indians	Pakistanis	Bengalis
A Lot	6%	18%	12%	15%	23%
A Fair Amount	47%	50%	52%	48%	46%
Not V. Much	35%	23%	26%	26%	23%
Not At All	12%	9%	10%	11%	8%
N	8134	1494	1116	676	421

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey

Endnotes

¹Prior to the late 1980s “black” was a common term used to unite the various non-white ethnic minorities in Britain, i.e. Caribbeans, Africans, Indians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis.

²The analytical categories “Muslim” and “South Asian” are sometimes used interchangeably in Britain, but should be considered as distinct – if overlapping – terms. The 2001 UK Census shows that 74% of Muslims are South Asian (Indian, Bangladeshis, or Pakistani), meaning more than 25% are non South Asian. The 2001 UK Census also shows that 50% of South Asians are Muslim, meaning exactly one half of South Asians are not Muslim. The groups most likely to be Muslim are Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, each at 92%. Source: UK Population Census

³ The BBC documentary series Panorama aired a special “A Question of Leadership” on August 21, 2005, which questioned whether Muslim leadership in Britain (most notably the Muslim Council of Britain) was sufficiently focused on solving the serious problems of poverty and social exclusion, as well as sufficiently strict with radical elements of British Islam, which supposedly led to the July 7 and 21, 2005 bombings.

⁴ Together Bangladeshis and Pakistanis comprise 59% of Britain’s Muslim population. Source: 2001 UK Census.

⁵ The 2000/1 Households Below Average Income and Family Resources Survey shows that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were the ethnic group most likely to live in low income households at approximately 60% of individuals, compared to under 30% for both Indians and Caribbeans. (See: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=269>).

⁶ The ethnic minority boost sample was obtained by two methods: 1) focused enumeration: two addresses to the left and the right of each core sample address were screened for the presence of ethnic minority adults, and, 2) high concentration boost: an additional sample of adults drawn from postcode sectors in which 18% or more of households were headed by an ethnic minority. The combination of methods

ensures enough ethnic minorities and a diverse population that does not entirely come from ethnic minority dense neighbourhoods. For the focused enumeration sample, of the 2,945 in-scope addresses, 62% were interviewed, 14% were not contacted, and 24% refused to participate. For the high concentration boost sample, of the 5,315 in-scope addresses, 52% were interviewed, 21% were not contacted, and 27% refused to participate. In comparison, for the 14,758 in-scope addresses of the core sample 64% were interviewed, 11% were not contacted, and 24% refused to participate. While the ethnic minority high concentration boost sample has the lowest response rate, the refusal rates are similar across all three samples, suggesting that ethnic minorities were just as likely to respond favourably to the interviewer as whites. This therefore minimizes the importance of self-selection effects where respondents from one ethnic group would be more likely to be alienated and less likely to participate. The big difference in response rates is between the 21% of the high concentration ethnic minority boost sample that was not contacted and the 11% of the core sample that was not contacted. This difference is likely due to ethnic minorities being more likely to work several jobs and during unconventional hours, and the suggested sample weights were used to minimize these and other possible sample biases.

⁷ The Citizenship Survey includes 16 questions on perceptions of discrimination by various actors: surgeons, local schools, housing departments, local councils, private landlords, armed forces, insurance companies, bank/building societies, job centers, courts, crown prosecution, home office, police, immigration authorities, prison service, and probation service. While ethnic groups had slightly different responses according to the different actors, I included only one of these variables because of the high correlation among responses to these questions. Including more than one measure of perceptions of discrimination would introduce multicollinearity, leading to unreliable significance values, confidence intervals, and directions of the coefficients. I chose to include the variable for courts because it measures a national institution but is not overly-determined to produce a negative response, as the more intrusive crown prosecution, home office, police, immigration authorities, prison service, or probation service might have been. However, the results are consistent across all discrimination variables. Another option to these questions on perceived hypothetical discrimination was a series of questions on perceived discrimination in real life cases of being fired from employment or treated poorly at work. While this latter series of

questions has the advantage of being closer to actual events, the sample size dwindles dramatically because it only includes people who have been fired from employment, treated poorly at work, etc. In addition the second set of questions remain based on perceptions, and are therefore not as useful as the first set, which retain a larger sample size.

⁸ An example of a variable in ascending order with equal intervals would be 1- \$10, 2- \$20, 3- \$30, 4- \$40.

⁹ The 2001 Census shows that 29% of Caribbean men and 20% of Caribbean women are married with another ethnicity compared to less than 10% of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi men and women. Data on ethnicity of partners is not yet available for the 2001 Census, but the 1991 Census revealed that 27% of Caribbean men had white partners, compared to 7% of Indians, 5% of Pakistanis, and 3% of Bangladeshis while 15% of Caribbean women had white partners, compared to 4% of Indians, 1% of Pakistanis, and 0% of Bangladeshis (Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics; Berrington 1996)

¹⁰ A 1999 Commission for Racial Equality Factsheet presents data from numerous studies which all claim that South Asians are more likely than Caribbeans to suffer from racial harassment and violent attacks (Commission for Racial Equality 1999). See also Nanton (1999) for an in-depth treatment of how Caribbeans are considered more assimilated and closer to the British mainstream than South Asians.

¹¹ The relationship between education and national identification is discussed in various strands of literature. Brooks (2000) writes about the internationalized culture of the highly educated while Pasture and Verberckmoes (1998) write about the importance of national-level identity for working class people.

¹² It is not surprising that perceived discrimination is not significant for Indians because they are less likely to be victims of discrimination than Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, or Muslims in general, and the discrimination they do face has not hindered their significant socio-economic achievements in comparison to Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Muslims in general (Modood and Berthoud 1997). It is less intuitive why discrimination is not significant for Bangladeshis. One possible explanation is that Bangladeshis have the

smallest sample size of all groups and although discrimination has a P-value of 0.059 in Model B it might become significant at $P < 0.05$ with a larger sample. Another possible explanation is that Bangladeshis are more recent migrants than Pakistanis or Indians and are more likely to be focused on the initial stages of adjustment instead of discrimination.

¹³ Trust in both Parliament and the local council would be significant for Pakistanis at $p < .10$.

¹⁴ In the Citizenship Survey 86% of Muslims born abroad have “fair” or “very” strong attachment to Britain compared to 80% of Muslims born in Britain, for Indians it is 88% to 80%, Bangladeshis 89% to 77%, and Pakistanis 88% to 75%.