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MA by Research thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for

MA by Research (Art and Design) FT

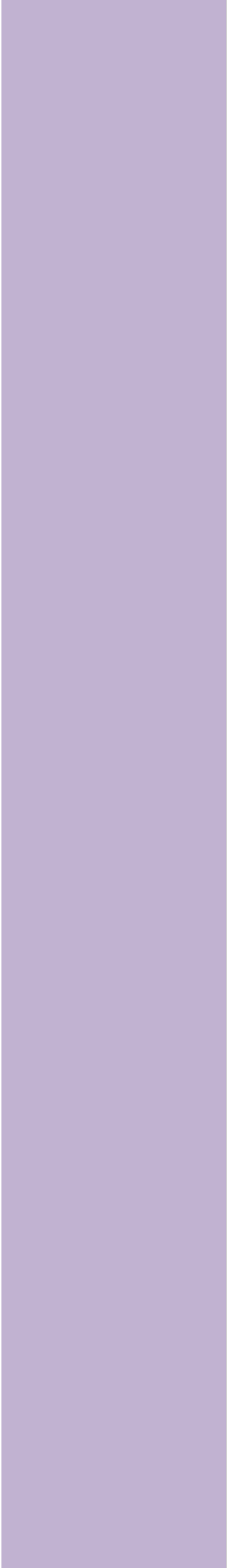
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The University of Huddersfield School of Art & Design

Department of Design, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire,

England

(25/07/2018)



The effects that the concept of modesty has on the everyday dress of women from religious groups within London neighbourhoods currently.

ABSTRACT

“Tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment.”

Qu’ran (24:30)

This study investigates the correlation between modesty and the dress of religious Muslim and Jewish women in London. A key element of this study is examining the different religious concepts behind modesty and women and how they have interpreted them to form their own personal identity through the clothing that they wear.

This is an ethnographic study into the modest dress of Jewish and Muslim women within specific London neighbourhoods. Qualitative data was used to gather research exploring the definitions of modesty within Judaism and Islam.

Drawing on existing research into both modesty and dress within the UK this study shows how religious identity can influence a woman’s ideals of modesty within a multicultural society and how these ideals affect their clothing choices. Secondary academic research provides historical context for the multifaceted subject of modesty and dress. This study combines religious text with modern theories and ideas, which provides a broad perspective on the topic. The term ‘modest dress’ has become popularised in the past five years, with religious communities at the forefront of this clothing revolution. *Lewis (pg 5, 2011)* has studied the growth of modest dress within London: “...modest dressing is on the rise, and they, more so than their mothers or grandmothers, are combining modest dress with mainstream fashion styles and shapes”.

Through this investigation, the religious principles of modesty were analysed by conducting a large amount of primary research, involving visiting places of

religious worship, neighbourhoods known for concentrated religious communities, and engagement with religious community groups. 7 unique women were interviewed about modesty and the social dilemmas they face in wearing or not wearing modest dress. This study focused on the way modest dress ideals are incorporated into the self-identity of women and how they master the challenges and conflict of a modern worldview of fashionable belonging.

KEYWORDS

Modesty, ethnographic, clothing

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To understand women's interpretation of modesty, what informs this and how it affects women's personal identity. Focusing on Muslim and Jewish women within concentrated areas of London will allow for an impartial and stimulating cross section study.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To use qualitative and observational methods to establish key modesty codes
- ❖ To examine the religious concepts that inform the ideas of modesty within Islam and Judaism
- ❖ Using existing academic research and current press to form background ideas of modesty and the religious codes of modesty

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
1.1 Defining modest dress: The rise of modest dress and making modest fashionable	3
1.2 Interpretation	7
1.3 Fashion and understanding	7
1.4 Interpretation of religious texts	10
1.5 How immodesty and nudity have been interpreted	12
1.6 Veiling and the contradictions of concealing and revealing	17
1.7 Hats, hair and hijabs	19
1.8 Clothing as identity	25
1.9 Identity in social and religious groups	30
1.10 Religious representation within pop culture, Secondary Research	33
1.11 The hijab as depicted on TV	35
1.12 Portrayal of British Jewishness	38
Chapter 2	
2.1 London a contextual analysis	44
2.2 Area demographics	46
2.3 Jewish community	44
2.4 Muslim community	48
2.5 Segregation in the capital	49
2.6 Conclusions	51

Chapter 3

3.1 Overview of research methods	52
3.2 Population	55
3.3 Location	57
3.4 Restrictions	57
3.5 Sampling	58
3.6 Procedures	59
3.7 Materials	62
3.8 Variables	62
3.9 Statistical	62
3.10 Conclusions	63

Chapter 4

4.1 Primary Research: The Geography of Clothing, a first hand Observation	65
4.2 Golders Green	66
4.3 Stamford Hill	68
4.4 Hounslow	71
4.5 Whitechapel	73
4.6 Observational Conclusions	75

Chapter 5

5.1 Participants	77
5.2 Interviews participant's characteristics	77
5.3 Findings	78
5.4.1 Religious Identity	81
5.5.1 Visual Identity of faith	83
5.5.2 Question conclusions	86

5.6.1 Interpretations of the concepts of modesty and modest dress	87
5.6.2 Question conclusions	90
5.7.1 What they wear, what was their personal style?	91
5.7.2 Question conclusion	94
5.8.1 The High Street	94
5.8.2 Question conclusions	96
5.9.1 Digital visibility of modest dressers	96
5.9.2 Question conclusion	100
Chapter 6	
6.1 Conclusions	102
6.2 Further reading	105
Glossary of terms	107
Figures	109
Appendices	114
Bibliography	140
References	144
Figure References	151

FIGURES CONTENTS

Figure 1 & 2	109
Figure 3 & 4	110
Figure 5 & 6	111
Figure 7 & 8	112
Figure 9	113
Figure 10 & 11	114
Figure 12 & 13	115
Figure 14	116
Figure 15 & 16	117
Figure 17	118

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship women in London have with the concept of modesty and how it is shown through their clothing. Existing research on modest dress focuses on the clothing of Muslim women, due in part, to the current political climate. This study discusses both Muslim and Jewish ideas of modesty and modest dress, comparing religious and cultural codes.

This study seeks to understand and explain the thought processes that go into women's choices of modest dress. *Lewis (2013)* discussed and examined both Jewish and Muslim women's modest dress in London several years ago. Her paper takes existing academic studies and combines it with the author's own qualitative ethnographic investigation of current trends to bring the research of modest dress up to date.

The continued immigration of people from different cultures and religions makes London arguably the most multicultural city in the UK. There are areas in London where modest dress is more visible, for example the shietals of Stamford Hill and the niqabs of Whitechapel. The diverse nature of London is what makes it such a unique city, and is why it forms the backdrop of this study, "This positive attitude towards diversity is claimed to be central to London's identity... and is to some extent embedded in policy and often drawn upon and celebrated in the arts" Massey 2007.

London is a cosmopolitan city as it is ethnically diverse, with over "50 non-indigenous communities with a population of more than 10,000" (QMUL, 2013).

"Cosmopolitanism has been described as the cultural habitus of globalisation, it is therefore, albeit defined somewhat loosely, often associated with ethnically diverse, global cities" (Devadason, 2010). London is a global city with thousands of communities living side by side.

Judaism is the fifth largest religion in Britain, while Islam is the second most practiced religion. This study focuses on the localisation of modest dress

within London, from the clothing of Muslim women in Hounslow, to that of Orthodox Jewish women in Stamford Hill. Collecting local ethnographic data was integral for understanding different local trends and customs.

London has the most concentrated number of Jewish people in the UK, with 60% of the British Jewish population living in the city (150,293). London is also home to 40% of the country's Muslim population, which is far larger and more dispersed across the country compared to the more concentrated Jewish population. A majority of existing research into modesty or religious groups is American, (for example *Sobh et al (2012)*). However, this study focuses on London, because of its unique position in the UK. London is arguably the most diverse city in the UK, which is why I chose it as the location for this study; "London was found to be the most ethnically diverse area..." *ONS Census (2011)*.

Miller (2009) comments on London's diversity: "The diversity of contemporary London is extraordinary and begs to be better understood." What makes London such a hybridised city is that it has the "... highest proportion of minority ethnic groups..." and also has "the highest proportion of Muslims (12%), Hindus (5%), Jews (2%) and Buddhists (1%), as well as people of 'Other religions' (1%)." This study looks in depth at four areas in London with high concentrations of either Muslims or Jews; Stamford Hill, Hounslow, Golders Green and Whitechapel.

This chapter explores and examines what modest dress is; to do this clothing and fashion are defined using a sociological approach. This chapter provides vital context for the rest of the study as it looks at the meanings of modesty and its links to piety. Importantly this chapter examines religious texts and how they have been interpreted, this answers the aim of the study as well as the second objective. Exploring the variations in veiling is a key point within this study as veiling is the most visible form of modest dress; classical art and TV representation are inspected. In order to look at different groups of people it is integral to understand ingroup and outgroup methods, which this chapter also details. This chapter is where the one of the objectives is investigated as this chapter focuses on secondary research and existing academic knowledge on the study of modesty and modest dress.

1.1 THE RISE OF MODEST DRESS AND MAKING MODEST FASHIONABLE

Modest dressing has become far more visible and popular among today's young generation than with their forbears, and the trend is on the increase. *Lewis (pg 5, 2011)* states: "...modest dressing is on the rise, and they [young women], more so than their mothers or grandmothers, are combining modest dress with mainstream fashion styles and shapes". The author's own research underlines this previous finding as participants detailed their style and clothing within the findings.

The 'Google Trends' tool offers another way to measure the rise of modest dress in the past five years. Taking news reports into account, the phrase "modest dress" has been more frequently mentioned since July 2012, while web mentions of "modest dress" have been steadily increasingly over the same period, with mentions of the phrase peaking in the spring of each year (*see chart below*).

From September 2016, when this study began, the term “modest dress” has been increasingly frequently searched for on Google, with searches peaking in March-April 2017. A reason for this could be the seasonal changes in the UK, as there is a common trend in the summer to show more skin, while in the winter when the weather gets colder it is the fashion to cover up. In Google news searches, “modest dress” also peaked in March 2017. This preliminary research confirms that the term “modest dress” has become more popular in the past two years than previously, with more digital visibility and mentions on the web and in the news.



Tracking the online mentions of 'modest dress' over 5 years using Google Trends (July 2012- July 2017)

The term “modest fashion” has been used since 2000 but the discussion of modesty within clothing and dress has been written about since 1899 (*Thomas, 1899*). The major influencing factor in the increase of interest and popularity in modest dress is the rise of digital technology, social media connectivity and continued globalisation, which has led to increased adoption of modest dress. *Lewis (pg 50, 2013)* writes about the effect that the internet has had on disseminating of the ideas of modest dress: “women are using the internet to share ideas, rate styles, comment on mainstream provision and intervene in debates about modest behaviour, extending the opportunities offered offline by the establishment in print of faith-based style media in the first half of the 2000s”.

Digital visibility can be measured by looking at the quantity of digital articles written about modest dress as well as the number of modest dress bloggers and YouTubers. The hashtag #modestdress on Instagram has over 37,800 images of modest outfits of the day. Instagram provides an interactive

platform for like-minded people to communicate, whether they are religious or not. *Khan (2017)* recently wrote a piece for *The Guardian* on the rise of modest dress and social media's impact on the market: "Abu Bakr says social media is responsible: a lot of young people use social media, and that has been the cause of the push for this fashion revolution, just like we saw with the Arab spring. Now we're seeing that change in fashion."

The Arab union Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been a major player in making modest dress a commodity rather than simply a form of religious dress. The financial power of the Arab states influences clothing companies to create lines and ranges designed specifically for them. *Mahajan* writing for the *Harvard Business Review (2013)* states: "If the Arab League were a single country, its 2011 GDP would have been more than \$2.3 trillion, making it the world's eighth-largest economy — bigger than India or Russia."

"Globalisation is nothing but the (middle) way of cross-pollinating and cross-fertilising cultural meanings, ideas, and values in multiplicity. It enhances our chances for cosmopolitanism" *Jung (2011)*.

The 'modest fashion' industry is constantly evolving; currently the industry is worth \$484billion, say *Ainley and Sinclair Scott* for *CNN (2017)*. Brands like Uniqlo, H&M, Dolce & Gabbana and Nike, are already using models wearing hijabs. Uniqlo has created a hijabi collection with designer Hana Tajima to promote its brands to the wider Muslim market, and for commercial benefit. These brands have noted the economic benefit of including modest ranges and models in their fashion lines. They are also responding to the demand of the growing modest dressing market.



(L-R) Hana Tajima for Uniqlo, Mariah Idrissi form H&M, hijabi range for Dolce and Gabbana

Author Shelina Janmohamed, who coined the term 'Generation M', describes the generation in this way: "they (Muslims) are proud of their faith, enthusiastic consumers, dynamic, engaged, creative and demanding" (Sherwood, 2016). Generation M has formed online platforms and communities to celebrate Islam and modest dress through social media, bloggers, online shops, YouTubers and websites like MuslimGirl.com.

In February 2017 the first ever London Modest Fashion Week was held at Chelsea's Saatchi Gallery, and hosted a wide variety of purely Islamic fashion and also had a catwalk show of the latest trends (figure 1). This LMFW represents the popularity of the Mipsterz (Muslim Hipster). "A Mipster is someone at the forefront of the latest music, fashion, art, critical thought, food, imagination, creativity, and all forms of obscure everything" (Mipster Facebook page). The Mipster trend began with a viral video and has now spawned a generation of young, digitally savvy Muslims.



Somewhere in America Mipsterz music (2014) video by Created by Abbas Rattani and Habib Yazdi Director: Habib Yazdi

"The 'Mipsterz' first began as a satirical, thought-generating jab at corporate culture and evolved into a limitless collective that empowers individuals to find coolness in themselves and share their God given gifts with all" (Mipster Facebook page, 2016).

Whilst the rapid growth of modest dress has been discussed within the media, the primary issue with current modest dress studies or articles is the assumption that modest dress means hijabi or Islamic fashion. There is minimal discussion of other forms of modest dress, which is why both Jewish and Islamic aspects are studied in this study.

The London College of Fashion recently published a discussion on the modest dress of Jewish and Islamic women and the implications it has on the world of fashion. "The numbers of women wanting to dress modestly in accordance with their understanding of their faith is growing in the UK and around the world, most notably among the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity" (*Lewis pg 5, 2011*). Modest dress acts as a visible marker of one's faith, as well as a way of communicating amongst groups. "They create a very interesting space for interfaith engagement where women share subjective experiences of modesty and recognise points of similarity and difference between faiths" (*Lewis, pg 9, 2011*).

1.2 INTERPRETATION

Understanding the many and varied nuances in modest dress means looking at the distinct ingroup and outgroup personalities and how they have chosen to interpret modest dress. The connotations of modest dress include piety, innocence, respectability and decency, and although modest dress focuses on religious communities, dressing modestly is not always about religious beliefs.

1.3 FASHION AND UNDERSTANDING

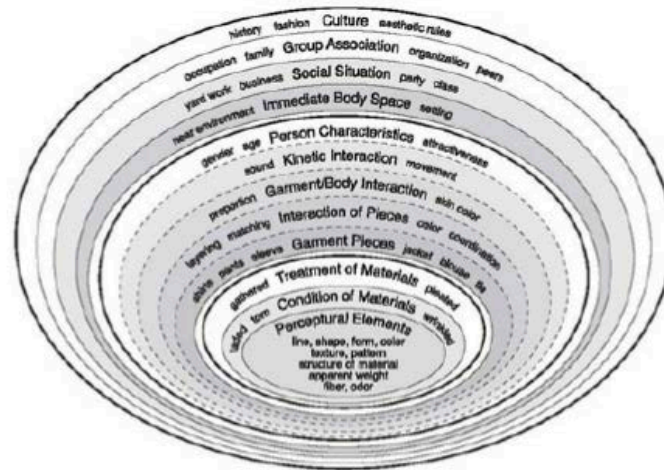
The definition of fashion has been interpreted in thousands of different ways since it first became a subject for discussion. One common view is that it is the process of taking ideas from minority groups and popularising them.

“Fashion, then, is a particular system of dress found under particular social circumstances.”
Entwistle (pg 42,2015)

Another view of fashion is that it is a social construct interpreted as the popular clothing and dress of any given time. “Fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation...” (*Simmel 1904*). By wearing what is popular, Simmel argues that people crave the adaptation into social groups that fashion offers. Referred to as a form of social stratification, fashion allows people to identify themselves and each other's ingroups through their dress.

Modest dress has become a fashion, with people dressing in a similar way, to become a member of an ingroup; “fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life... the tendency towards social equalisation with the desire for individual differentiation and change” *Simmel (1904)*.

The way fashion and dress is interpreted is a social-psychological matter as detailed by *Reilly et al (2014)*, how a person's dress is perceived by a member of an ingroup or outgroup is down to 12 elements beginning with the simple cut of the clothing and fabric to the fashion and culture. “*Damhorst (1989, 2005)*, developed a model that envisions aesthetic perception as a series of embedded elements or networks. At the centre of the model are the perceptual elements such as line, shape, form, colour, etc. This is encompassed by the condition of the material. The condition of the material is encompassed by the treatment of the materials, and so on” *Reilly (pg 38, 2014)*. This model is important as it explores and describes the reasons behind a person's clothing, specifically it can be used to describe the various elements of modest clothing. The colour of modest dress of one group is different to another, as are the cultural signifiers and fashions of each group of modest dressers.



Damhorst's model

“A fashion arises because individuals of low social status copy those of perceived high status. When a trait becomes popular, however, high-status individuals quickly abandon the trait to differentiate themselves from low-status individuals. As a consequence, low-status individuals abandon the traits too, bringing the fashion cycle to an end.”

Acerbi et al (2012)

With modest dress, the cycle does not entirely follow the conventional fashion pattern. Here it starts with religious people influencing higher, wealthier classes, who pick up on the simple dress. These higher class social groups then influence the designers, and in turn the influencers, then the high street, and back to the beginning of the cycle. Modest dress has become popularised as a fashion because it is versatile, and can be worn by anybody, whether they are religious or not, and regardless of their financial means.



Infographic detailing the fashion cycle of modest dress

“The fact has to be emphasised that neither in the Qur’an nor in a reliable Hadith can be found any explicit ordinance promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad ordering either Muslim women in general or his own wives to veil themselves, or in particular to face-veil.”

Guindi (1999)

1.4 INTERPRETATION OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS

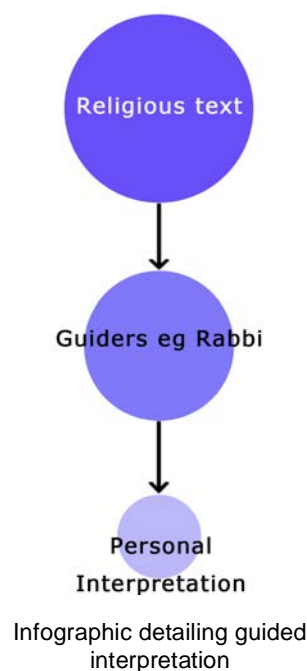
Abrahamic religions centre on a manuscript or holy book, commonly written in ancient languages, which require translations for most modern readers, often leading to further complications with their interpretation. The interpretation of these religious texts is known as hermeneutics, a much-debated topic. Some people believe that these religious texts should be interpreted literally, whereas others think they should be interpreted much more loosely so as to allow modifications for the modern world. This level of subjectivity within the interpretation of religious texts has led to the variety and nuances in how modesty is interpreted through dress. Islam and Judaism have different hermeneutic interpretations of what modesty means, which followers of these religions then go on to interpret in many different ways.

These multiple interpretations are highly subjective and open to disagreement. Religious texts are subject to interpretation by each religious individual. Most practicing people use guided interpretation to direct and council them in their daily lives and ethical queries.

“Originally an approach used for the interpretation of ancient and biblical texts.” *Kinsella (2006)*

“The subjective correlate of meaning can be called interpretation to perceive an object or situation as having a particular kind of meaning is to interpret...” *Hick (pg 138, 1989)*

Guided interpretation within religion can be from a religious leader such as a Rabbi or Imam, it can be the teachings of religious scholars, or it can be in the recorded words of a prophet in the case of Hadiths, or laws in the case of the Talmud. These experienced faith practitioners are respected within their communities, their knowledge is rarely questioned, and they are the religious authority. At the core of this study is the wide variety of ways in which religious women in London interpret modesty and specifically modest dress.



1.5 HOW IMMODESTY AND NUDITY HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED

Modest dress requires covering up the body, but this process of hiding the female form also brings with it implications of nudity and sexuality, as the sociologist *Thomas (1899)* writes: "...far as sexual modesty is concerned, the clothing has only reinforced the already great suggestive power." *Janzen (2011)* argues that nudity's links to immodesty have come from a passage in Genesis; "in the beginning, man and woman were without and apart from sin. After sin entered...Adam and Eve realised their nakedness and sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons". By implying nakedness as a sin it suggests the covering of forbidden fruit, which has led to the adoption of clothing as a way of hiding ones perceived nakedness. Sometimes covering up is seen as suggestive — what is underneath the clothing? What are they hiding?

The passage from Genesis that Janzen refers to, comes originally from the Jewish holy book, the Torah, which was the foundation for the Old Testament of the Holy Bible:

"And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves and made themselves girdles."

Torah Bereishit, Chapter 3

Further to the Bible and the Jewish faith, this study also investigates Islamic theories of modesty that have been influenced by the Qur'an. As the Abrahamic religions share a lot of commonalities, there is a Qur'anic passage which is very similar to Bereishit and Genesis.

"Their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies."

Qur'an (7:22)

“O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you...” *Qur’an (7:26)*

The key issue with relying on religious texts is the translations, specifically regarding the Qur’an and the Torah, with some translators considered more reliable than others. The author has used Abdullah Yusufali’s translation of the Qur’an throughout this study, on the recommendation of PhD academic *Tinson*, who considers it a highly reliable source. For Torahanic translations the author used online resource and website *chabad.org* as it has a good reputation in academia as a trustworthy source for the study of the Torah.

Both of the passages above show that the religious perceptions of modesty and nudity are related. This idea of modesty is vital within this study as it affects people’s dress, and their ideals of what is modest within clothing: “modesty — which may be provisionally defined as an almost instinctive fear, prompting to concealment, and usually centring around the sexual nature...” *Ellis (1899)*

Barnard (pg 55, 2013) makes an important comment about modesty being different in all cultures: “there are no conceptions of shame or modesty, but rather that those conceptions will be different in different cultures”.

“According to the interpretations of Muslim theologians and intellectuals, the modesty emphasised in these passages encompasses all aspects of life and calls for decency, humility and moderation in speech and attitude, dress and total behaviour.” *Sandıkci, & Ger (pg 63, 2005)* discussing the Islamic interpretations of modest (haya) behaviour within religious texts.

Barnard (pg 53, 2013) comments: “the argument for modesty revolves around the idea that certain body parts are indecent or shameful and should be covered so that they cannot be seen”. The connection between religious

ideals of modesty and covering is a leftover of Victorian sensibilities, when wearing modest clothing connoted piety. During this period in history there was a rise in Christian piety, which can be seen through the high necklines and long hemlines of women; "... the clothing of this period (19th Century) can be conceived of as a form of body modification that inculcated certain Christian ideals of bodily concealment and psychological and sexual inhibition, in line with understandings of moral righteousness and purity" *Kuchler, Were (pg 76, 2005)*.

The fashion cycle frequently repeats itself regarding which body parts are fashionable to show or conceal. During the Victorian era it was fashionable for women to show their shoulders and bust, then during the 1900s showing the arms and collarbone was the vogue. The 1920s saw the rise of the flapper girl and the displaying of legs, while in the 1990s it was all about showing the stomach with crop tops; "the verbal discourse attending dress has historically had two main components, a language of fashion that welcomes new styles, and a moralizing commentary that castigates them" (*Harvey, 2007*). This idea, it could be argued, has come from the religious texts of both Muslims and Jews, as the act of covering various body parts is described within the Qu'ran:

"...And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their **veils** over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment."
(*Qu'ran 24:30*)

The Judaic interpretations of modesty or *tzniut* are based on the idea that Jews are the chosen people. Tzniut refers to a code of behaviour and dress. The following Torah passages describe the Jewish people as Holy, and as such how they should act:

"O man, what is good, and what the Lord demands of you; but to do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk discreetly with your God" (*Micah 6:8*)

“Thus, you shall be holy, because I am holy.” (*Leviticus* 11:45)

“...and you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy” (*Leviticus* 11:44)

Lieber (2010) summarises modesty within Judaism as; “the concept of tzniut also involves a sense of women's piety in which her absence or invisibility in the public sphere is valued. The custom of dressing modestly and covering the hair in public can be argued as an extension of this concept — a woman's body is not to be displayed in the public sphere, partly so as not to arouse sexual desire among men.”

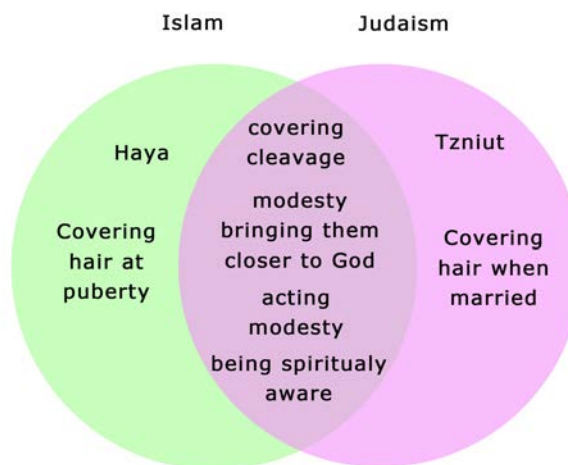
“In terms of apparel, ultra-orthodox Jewish women often require sleeves that extend to the wrist and necklines that cover or reach above the collar bone. Modern orthodox Jewish women also want to cover to their elbows ...though high neckline will be considered sufficient.” *Lewis (pg 10, 2011)*

Wang (2014) at refinery29.com wrote: “Each creed or sect has its own strict clothing guidelines that pertain to fabric, colours, length, and cut. For most, that means elbows are covered; necklines stay high; long, conservative skirts are a must; and married women cover their hair.” While Wang is writing about Orthodox Jewish dress, this also relates to all the theories and codes of modest dress that are discussed in this study, including Islamic modest dress. *Cunningham (2015)* writing for refinery29.com has written about what modesty means for young women: “It's about looking in the mirror and being satisfied with what's looking back at you; practising proper etiquette and kindness to those around you, and respecting the religious beliefs and faith to which you adhere.”



A screenshot of a video, showing the parts of the body Orthodox women cover. (Refinery29)

Islam and Judaism have very similar, beliefs when it comes to modesty and clothing — they both agree that specific parts of a woman’s body should be covered. Both religions define modesty as a way of acting, by being observant of the faith and taking care when speaking. Modesty acts as a moral compass, guiding members of religious communities to do what they believe is right. The focus on nudity and immodesty has been interpreted in a multitude of different ways, with some women choosing to cover their hair and face, while others cover their arms and legs and some don’t cover specific body parts. By exploring a variety of ways in which women interpret modest dress, the author of this study is seeking to present a unique perspective on the religious influences on dress.



Venn diagram by author comparing basic Jewish and Muslim concepts of modest clothing

1.6 VEILING AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CONCEALING AND REVEALING

There have been classical depictions of the veil in art for centuries, often depicting young virginal women. These classical images connote the ideals of modesty as being innocent and pious and these pieces of art often depict the female subject wearing a form of veil. The link between modesty and veiling in these paintings is visible, with the subjects' hair hidden from the prying eyes of the viewer.

Such painting acts as a visual history of what women have worn through the ages and how much this has changed; the paintings are evidence that veiling is not a new concept. The historical dress of Islamic and Jewish women can be found in paintings and classical art, showing similar styles to the current trends in modest clothing.



Vermeer , Girl with a Pearl Earring 1665



Fabio Fabbi The Orange Seller (1861-1946)



A Woman by Robert Campin. 1435

A classical example of the eroticism of the veil, for example, comes from the Colonial Harem by Malek Alloula, a collection of postcards of Algerian women featuring nudity and veils (figure 3). Each of these classical portrayals of veiling alludes to sexuality, as the very notion of veiling or covering connotes the idea of hidden secrets, what is underneath the veil, being tempted by what you can't see, "...for women especially, clothes are more about framing, emphasising, enhancing or concealing the shape of the body than the practicalities of keeping warm..." (Bainbridge, 2015)

The most thought-provoking examples of Islamic veiling are those of the Prophet Muhammad. In early Persian and Islamic art he appears with a full-face veil, hiding any features. Most Muslims believe that showing the face of Muhammad is forbidden; “for most Muslims it's an absolute prohibition — Muhammad, or any of the other prophets of Islam, should not be pictured in any way. Pictures — as well as statues — are thought to encourage the worship of idols” (*contributor to online discussion at defenceforumindia.com, 2015*). The images of Muhammad are forbidden within Sunni Islam, whereas in Shia countries images of the Prophet are far less restricted and can be found in people's homes. There is no actual statement in the Qu'ran that explicitly bans this, but the Islamic faith generally precludes the worship of false idols, that can distract from the 'One God':

Behold! he said to his father and his people, "What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?"

They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them."

He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers." *Surah 21 (52-54)*



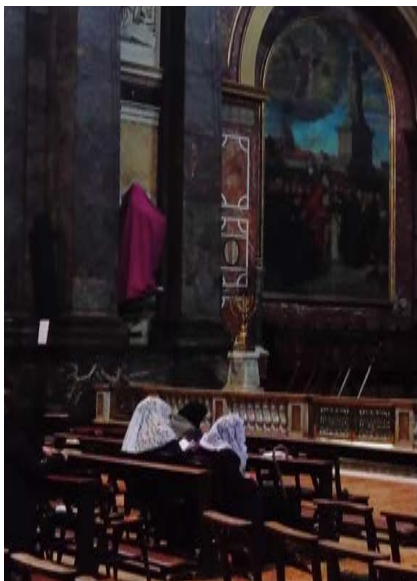
Classical paintings of the Prophet Muhammad wearing a veil possibly 16th Century

Art offers a valuable window on the times in which they were painted, but they are also the subjective view of the artists who painted them. Someone with preconceived biases may have commissioned them or the painters

themselves may have had biases, so they are open to multiple layers of interpretation. From the painter to the observer there are many possible interpretations and subjective opinions for each piece of art.

1.7 HATS, HAIR AND HIJABS

Veiling is the key physical manifestation of modest dress as it represents privacy; *Guindi (pg147, 2008)* examines the intricacies of veiling as; “dress in general, but particularly veiling, is privacy’s visual metaphor”. The act of veiling has always had strong links to modesty, respect and religion, with devout Catholics covering their hair and sometimes face with lace inside churches. The act of covering for respect and piety is something shared in all religions and in most cultures.



Devout Catholic women wearing lace veils in Brompton Oratory Church (South Kensington)



A modesty sign dictating what people must wear in order to enter Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome

Whilst this study focuses on both Jewish and Islamic ideas of veiling, some definitions of the Islamic veil (hijab) are also relevant to Jewish ideas of veiling. *Eicher & Evenson (2015)* discuss the various styles of veils, which could refer to both Islamic and Jewish variations. There are subtle nuances within the modest dress of Islamic and Jewish women, from the colour to the folding of the fabric.

“The veil can also be a fashion statement with a range of colours, fabrics, and surface embellishments, having multiple meanings, some straightforward and some subtle.” *Eicher & Evenson (pg 198, 2015)*

Veiling has been popular for centuries amongst various religions and cultures, and even though this practice predates Islam it has become synonymous with Muslim women. “The English term ‘veil’... is commonly used to refer to Middle Eastern and South Asian women’s traditional head, face (eyes, nose, or mouth), or body cover” *The Open University (2016)*. A poignant example of how the veil is portrayed is in Majane Satrapi’s autobiographical novel, *Persepolis* (figure 4), which sees the central character, a young girl, forced to wear the veil after the Iranian revolution in 1979. The book follows the journey of identity and belonging of a young Iranian girl as she experiences the revolution and life outside of her home country.

The actual word “veil” is used in the Qu’ran 24:30 “...draw their **veils** over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment”. As the word “adornment” possibly refers to breasts or hair, scholars and members of religious communities alike have argued over the contentious interpretation of this passage for hundreds of years. This is a prime example of hermeneutics as some women interpret the passage to mean that they have to cover their full face and body, whereas others just cover their hair and some women don’t cover anything specific.

The current political climate of hijab and face veiling bans in France¹ along with the ‘Muslim Bans’ in the USA² have made the hijab and veiling a much more political issue, with Islamic women bearing the forefront of negative attention from the media. *Sandıkçı & Ger (2005)* comment that; “although present in other religions, the practice of head covering today, whether in the form of scarf, veil or chador, has become synonymous with Islamic identity.”

¹ "Law of 2010-1192: Act prohibiting concealment of the face in public space"

² Within a number of weeks of Trump’s presidency there was an executive order placed to ban nationals from predominantly Muslim countries: Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen with dual nationals included in the ban.

The *Islamic Dictionary* raises the point that: “western feminists view hijab as a symbol of the subordination and inferiority of women in Islam.”

Eicher & Evenson (pg 198, 2015) echo this research that; “some people view the veil worn by Islamic fundamentalist women as oppression, a symbol of a religion that denies women political voice and economic freedom, and as being inferior to men.”

Bhowon and Bundhoo (2016) produced a qualitative study on the importance and reasons of veiling for Muslim women in America. They found the key reasons were: “...religious obligation, personal choice, affirm to religious identity, to oppose stereotypes and discrimination, to gain respect, create a safe space, and avoiding male attention.”

“The Encyclopaedia of Islam identified over a hundred terms of dress parts, many of which are used for veiling” *Guindi (pg6-7, 1999)*.

This study will describe and discuss some on the variations of ‘veils’ including jilbaabs, hijabs, burkas, niqabs and abaya. Veiling differs from country to country: the typical Iranian veil is called a chador, whereas in Saudi Arabia far more women wear niqabs. Veiling is a cultural and personal preference, but most variations of veiling do include the covering of women’s hair. Some of the intricate details of veiling will be described within this ethnographic study.

“Hijab is a symbol of modesty, privacy, and morality.” *Oxford Dictionary of Islam (2014)*



Illustrating the differences between various scarf styles within Islam

Veiling can be a physical manifestation of one's privacy. *Guindi (pg96, 1999)* describes a veil as a visual representation of privacy: "dress in general, but particularly veiling, is privacy's visual metaphor." She details how Muslim women use their veils to make any public space a private space for worship; "A woman carries her privacy and sanctity with her, much the same way as when a Muslim worships in any space, converting it to sacred and private". The act of veiling links to the idea of sanctity, and creating a sanctified or sacred space for worshippers to feel closer to their God. It serves as a reminder to be observant and respectful within the outside community with some women choosing to wear it "because they want to be visibly identifiable as 'Muslim', and for them a form of veiling is central to that identity" *Eltahawy (pg 31, 2015)*.

"The word hijab literally means curtain, and it is used in the Qu'ran as an instruction to believers of Muhammad's day on how they should deal with the prophet's wives..."
Brookes (1995) definition of hijab.

The Jewish custom of hair covering is little discussed within academia, which is why this study is seeking to investigate it. *Bronner (1993)* wrote about the intricate nature of hair covering amongst Jewish women, looking at the connection between the custom and the Bible; "the Bible presents hair as an ornament, enhancing the appearance of a woman". According to Bronner; "the Talmud not only regarded women's hair as beautiful, but as erotic, and for that reason it has to be covered". *Castelli and Rodman (pg 397, 2001)*, talked about the eroticism of the hair; "...a woman's head stands for her genitals by a kind of erotic metonymy", they compare the obsession with women's hair to that of a woman's ankle in the early 20th century as it held the same sexual taboo. The sacredness of hair is mentioned within the Torah:

"Then the kohen shall stand the woman up before the Lord and expose the [hair on the] head of the woman; he shall place into her hands the remembrance meal offering, which is a meal offering of jealousies, while the

bitter curse bearing waters are in the kohen's hand.”

Numbers 5:18

Hair covering within Judaism is a big part of tzniut, it is a symbol of piety as well as a form of protection from the non Jewish society, something explained by Heath (2008); “...it is her tzniuth [sic] clothing, her sacred covering, which not only publicises her religious intentions and identity but serves as symbolic protection against the unwelcome outside influences of the non-Jewish secular society...”

“The status of women’s hair in Orthodox Judaism is far from simple”, but “most authorities interpret a married woman’s locks as intrinsically erotic and categorically immodest.” *Silverman (pg 50, 2013)*

The act of hair covering can be discussed as both a law and a custom, as some Jewish women perceive it to be a religious law, whilst others obey it as a custom (married women covering hair in synagogue). The custom of married women covering their hair begins during the wedding in a veiling ceremony called *bedeken*. This is a central part of the ceremony as it represents the union of the husband and wife; it also gives ‘ownership’ of the woman’s hair to the man.

“Jewish religious law, in fact, requires married women, as well as divorcees and widows, to cover their hair in public”. *Silverman (pg 90, 2013)*

Heath (pg 49, 2008) discussed hair covering amongst Jewish women as a relationship identifier; “the head covering not only symbolically distinguishes a Torah-observant Jewish woman in New York City but also differentiates the married from the unmarried woman within the religious community.” Heath’s *The Veil* is a collection of studies and essays on veiling within cultural and religious contexts, which was a key resource for this study.

Silverman's *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* (pg 7, 2013) is one of the most prominent books about Jewish dress within modern society. His comments on veiling were; "in fact, no biblical passage or divine decree mandates veiling", but does go on to discuss passages where veiling is mentioned, specifically within Genesis.

The most popular forms of hair covering amongst married Jewish women are the sheitel or a tichel (figure 5), which are often accessorised with fascinators, hats or headbands. Differing styles depend on the area of residency and local customary traditions, and the delicate difference of dress between areas is discussed later within this study.

Looking at religious texts on modest dress and specifically veiling is a complex topic, as it is based off interpretations and speculation. This means that conducting a variety of first hand primary research is important for a non-biased study. No matter how many religious texts are read it needs to be remembered that nothing is 100% reliable, Guindi emphatically argues this point:

"The fact has to be emphasised that neither in the Qur'an nor in a reliable Hadith can be found any explicit ordinance promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad ordering either Muslim women in general or his own wives to veil themselves, or in particular to face-veil" (2003).

Veiling within both Islam and Judaism is such a multifaceted and subjective issue; there are so many different meanings behind each woman's choice to veil. There are also the meanings that members of outgroups express when they see women wearing visibly modest clothing, some positive, some negative due to their lack of understanding of the subject. *Eltahawy* (pg 35, 2015) discusses the inner meanings of the hijab, but what she says can be applied to all forms of religious veiling: "it is burdened with meanings:

oppressed woman, pure woman, conservative woman, strong woman, asexual woman, uptight woman, liberated woman”.

Whist this study discusses hijabs and wigs, the obvious fact remains that hair is seen as an adornment in the West, with increasingly fashionable hairstyles. The act of hair covering has been done in the West for hundreds of years, from the elegant hats of aristocratic women in the 18th century to modern day nuns.

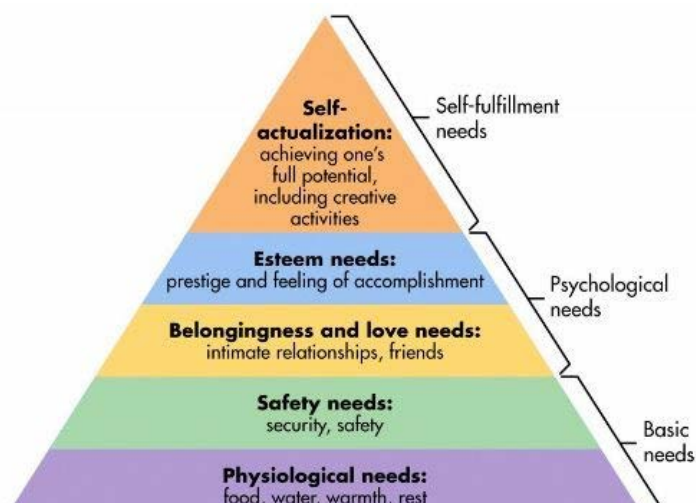
1.8 CLOTHING AS IDENTITY

The word “dress” is used throughout this study to describe body adornment as *Eicher and Evenson (pg 26, 2015)* explain: “dress includes clothing and accessories as well as grooming practices such as bathing or dyeing the hair”. *Boteach (2012)* takes a far more literal approach, saying: “clothes serve as our uniforms. They separate us from animals.”

“Dress constitutes one major example of material culture. Body supplements, such as trousers and shoes, are items of culture, as are the tools and materials involved in the process of body modification.” *Eicher & Evenson (pg 41, 2015)*

Dress and clothing are a crucial part of a person’s identity; the wearing of garments is how people broadcast group affiliation, as well as self-identity and expression.

Maslow created a hierarchy of needs in 1943, that shows the framework of



the psychological needs of the human state, and how important belonging is to a person.

This diagram looks at the levels of psychological, basic and fulfilment needs people have to be satisfied. Clothing, it could be argued, acts as a form of self-actualisation as it helps to form a person's identity; clothing is also used to communicate one's creativity. Clothing also provides the basic need of warmth, keeping warm through the use of fabric layers in colder climates is vital for humans to survive. All these elements go into a creating a person's sense of self worth.

Eicher and Evenson (pg 128, 2015) also look at clothing as a symbol to reflect one's needs: "Dress is a tool humans use to interface with the physical environment, pursue beauty, and communicate with one another. All human beings are capable of making artefacts to clothe and decorate our bodies and to develop a system of symbols connected with particular aspects of dress." *Eicher and Evenson (2015)* and *Craik (1994)* describe dress as a means of communicating, as dress holds emotional value.

"Dress also reflects or communicates nonmaterial culture, because how individuals dresses and the meaning attached to their dress relates to cultural beliefs about standards of dress and symbolic values" *Eicher and Evenson (pg 41, 2015)*. Dress was often a visible sign of superiority and being civilised; which *Kawamura (pg 126, 2011)* mentions: "dress was touted as a visible manifestation of the civilised state of being, of cultural superiority where advancement was defined in terms of superior economic development and global dominance."

The study of dress as a form of communication has previously been conducted from a psychological and sociological perspective (*Barthes, 2006 translation*), which included the semiotics of both dress and clothing. Barthes's study of dress and clothing semiotics is a very scientific approach, which can be difficult to interpret as he focused on the written language associated with fashion. These semiotics are the subtle differences in dress that connote specific things about the wearer, providing a form of non-verbal

communication. The way people communicate through clothing is ambiguous as the interpretation of clothing is subjectively different to each individual; “ambiguity, or rather our experience of it, recognised the possibility of alternative, contradictory or obscure interpretations” (Davis, pg 22, 1994).

“Semiotics, a discipline which is oriented to the study of signs and signification processes.” Zantides (introduction, 2014)

Within modest dress there are many small nuances that act as symbols and signs to members of ingroups and outgroups alike, these small signs can be anything from the way a hijab is tied, to the length of a wig or to the colour of an outfit. A lot can be found out from the semiotics within a person’s dress, where they are from can be shown through their choice of colour or length of clothing, how religious they are can sometimes correspond to length or the cut of the clothing. Within both Islam and Judaism clothes are used to differentiate between different sects or cultures (subgroups) each religious area might have their own unique style of clothing. Clothing and dress act as a form of nonverbal communication between people; it is a way of identification between groups.

“A body modification or supplement can convey important meaning in a particular context of observation. Information about the identity, intents and mood of the wearer is often conveyed...” Eicher & Evenson (pg 26, 2015)

People wear dress to show their allegiance to a group (religious, ethnic etc); “dress also reflects or communicates nonmaterial culture, because how individuals are dressed and the meaning attached to their dress relates to cultural beliefs about standards of dress and symbolic values” Eicher & Evenson (pg41, 2015). Dress being used to convey one’s culture or beliefs is the basis for this study, specifically in regards to religion. Crane (2000) writes: “Clothing revealed not only social class and gender but frequently

occupation, religious affiliation, and regional origin, as well.” *Jain (pg 231, 2008)* comments on dress as a signifier of one’s religion: “as part of a dress, its manner of use is often indicative not only of the religion one follows but also one’s caste, class, and perhaps region”. She also describes the link between clothing and spirituality/piety; “and from being a mere part of a dress, it has the capacity to signify a relationship between the self and the other”.

“...complexity and detail apparent in any dress ensemble and the role of those elements of dress in nonverbal communication about a wearer’s identity, activity, and particular mood” *Eicher & Evenson (pg 25, 2014)*. Even the smallest clothing details can connote different meanings.

Clothing and dress act as an important form of communication amongst groups, “within a community, distinctions among group members can identify other categories in addition to ethnicity, such as age, marital status, and religious or political affiliation” *Eicher & Evenson (pg 101, 2015)*.

Barnard (pg 67, 2013) says clothes signify status within various groups; “they may also signify status or position within that group or denomination, and they may indicate strength or depth of belief or participation”. *Eicher & Evenson (pg134, 2015)* use the example of Hasidic Jews; “the dress of Hasidic Jews communicates their specific cultural identity. Like many other human groups, they use distinctive ethnic dress to communicate a cultural and religious separation. Dress can create a sense of internal genetic homogeneity where it may not exist”. Further investigating Jewish and Islamic dress within the context of an ethnographic study of London allows for a unique look at the modest fashions within local environments.

A majority of research into clothing and dress has been conducted from a Eurocentric/Western-centric point of view. *Eicher & Evenson (pg43, 2015)* state that the study of dress has to be looked at from a variety of different cultures; “the definition of dress facilitates looking at dress processes and

items across cultures without introducing values and biases from particular perspectives”, which is what this study does.

The issue with some research, especially into Middle Eastern dress is that it is from a Western perspective, which can be biased. Eicher & Evenson explain: “If we come from a European heritage and have a belief that European ways of behaving are superior, we are practicing Eurocentrism and can be called Eurocentric” *Eicher & Evenson (pg 43, 2015)*. “The Eurocentric view promoted the stereotype of traditional dress as a rigidly prescribed costume form with few variations to differentiate the social roles and relationships within a community” *Eicher & Evenson (101, 2015)*.

The author seeks in this study to broaden the understanding of the modest dress, clothing and fashion of religious women in specific boroughs across London, from east to west. By researching the clothing of members of religious communities, this study reveals micro trends and commonalities within their interpretations of modesty.

1.9 IDENTITY IN SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

There are strong group identities within religious groups and this study will explore these identities, as understanding the social elements of being part of a group is important in understanding the dynamics of modest dress. *Tajfel (pg 2, 1982)* is a predominant figure in the psychological and sociological study of groups and it is Tajfel's definition of a group that this study will follow: “a ‘group’ can be defined as such on the basis of criteria which are either external or internal. External criteria are the ‘outside’ designations such as bank clerks, hospital patients, members of a trades union, etc. Internal criteria are those of ‘group identification’.”

Burke (pg 111, 2006) gives a concise definition of what a group is: “a group exists psychologically if three or more people construe and evaluate themselves in shared attributes that distinguish them collectively from other

people". It is this group that becomes the ingroup. They might have things in common such as religion, ethnicity or taste in music. The people outside this group are the outgroup. They are seen as outsiders, but are sometimes the majority.

Tajfel (1982) constructed the social identity theory; "social identity is defined as 'that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership". This relates to Maslow's theory that some needs take priority over others and these needs have a strong effect on a person's social identity. *Burke (pg 111, 2006)* builds on this: "social identity theory addresses phenomena such as prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, intergroup conflict, conformity, normative behaviours, group polarisation, crowd behaviour, organisational behaviour, deviance, and group cohesiveness."

Participants who the author interviewed for this study independently identified themselves as being members of religious groups, without any outside influence, so that this study would remain unbiased. Self-categorisation is important for this study as it allowed participants to determine and describe their own identity.

"...three levels of self-categorization that are important to the self-concept: the superordinate category of the self as human being (or human identity), the intermediate level of the self as a member of a social ingroup as defined against other groups of humans (social identity), and the subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on interpersonal comparisons (personal identity)" *Hornsey (2008)*.

This study delves into the *identity* of modest dressing women within religious groups. *(Ben-Ner, et al, 2009)* states: "identity is often the source of positive and desirable outcomes, such as the warm feeling of amity and affiliation, constructive and cooperative behaviour in the context of social, ethnic, and

religious organisations, as well as desirable diversity and variety”. This explains why people choose to identify as part of a group, specifically a religious group.

“Religion often is at the core of individual and group identity”, *Seul (1999)*.

Oppong (2013) comments that; “religion is more likely to play a significant role in identity formation in a culture where youth confront a continually fluctuating social and political milieu”, which explains why that in times of struggle people will turn to religion. *Seul (1999)* builds on this idea, detailing how religion can offer stability to an individual; “religions help provide the predictability and continuity that the individual needs to maintain a sense of psychological stability”. *Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007)* also discuss the importance of religion within one’s sense of identity; “religion is often of profound importance to people’s lives, and religious groups are among the more salient buttresses of identity. The lives of observant believers are organized around their religious beliefs, values, and practices that provide certainty and meaningfulness...” *Seul (1999)* agrees that religion is profound part of a person’s identity; “religious meaning systems define the contours of the broadest possible range of relationships – to self; to others near and distant, friendly and unfriendly; to the nonhuman world; to the universe; and to God, or that which one considers ultimately real or true.”

People with strong religious identities find that religion is their main identifier, as *Seul (1999)* writes: “religious groups often demand a high level of commitment from their members, so that it may be extremely difficult to shed one’s religious identity once it is established”. This will be touched on within the findings as some participants have left conservative religious communities, and this has affected their personal identity.

Religious identity can become even more profound within a person or community when they are immigrants to another country where they are considered a minority. This is a topic discussed by *Peek (2005)*;

“consequently, religion can assume greater importance for immigrants' definition of self and group affiliations than was the case in their homelands, where religion may have been taken for granted or at least been of lesser importance”. *Peek (2005)* has written about the importance of having a part of an immigrant group identity within a host country and how dress has affected this; “religious dress, practices, and organizational affiliations serve as important identity markers that help promote individual self-awareness and preserve group cohesion”.

Barnard (2013, pg 68) has also commented that the dress of religious groups is a large part of both group identity and personal identity; “it is clear that dress is being used here to indicate strength and depth of religious belief and observance in a number of very intricate ways”. *Tarlo (2010)* also agrees that “for women, not only does dress indicate faith and membership of a wider religious community with all the feelings of sisterhood and solidarity this may engender, but it also plays a vital role in visually signalling that a woman's body and hair are off-limits to men and that she expects to be treated with a certain degree of distance and respect”.

1.10 RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATION IN POP CULTURE

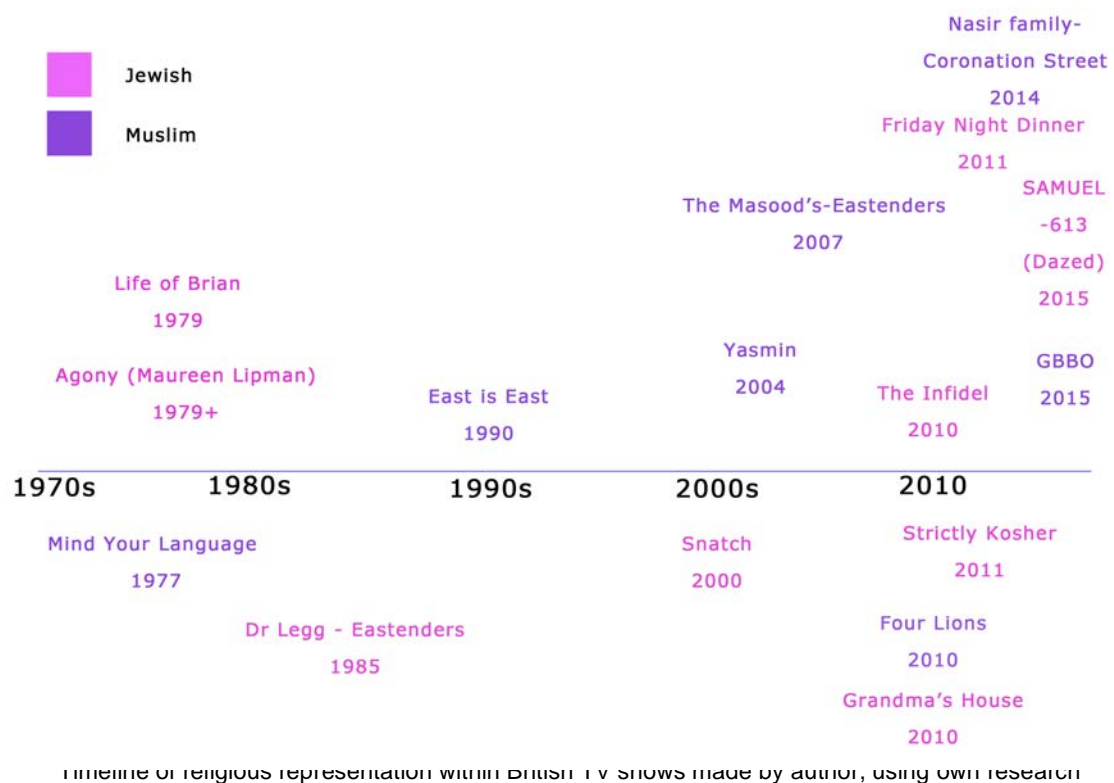
SECONDARY RESEARCH

Popular culture is a convoluted and multifaceted topic, as there is no finite definition. A majority of research in ‘pop culture’ is sociological and attempts to differentiate between what is high culture and what is popular culture. High culture is usually the activities undertaken by the intelligentsia, whereas popular culture is what ordinary people consume. ‘Ordinary’ people are those who follow the current status quo and the societal norm.

In order to define popular culture, culture itself needs to be studied and examined further. A prominent figure within the study of culture and popular culture is *Storey (pg 2, 2015)*, who expands on the belief that culture is a signifying practice; “...culture as signifying practices — would allow us to

speak of soap opera, pop music, and comics, as examples of culture. These are usually referred to as texts.” Storey also describes the idea of ‘lived culture’ such as holidays, celebrations and youth subcultures. For this chapter, I focus on popular culture consumed by ordinary people: as in television, film and books.

Storey (2015) expands on popular culture as being commercial culture; “...popular culture is often supported by claims that popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture...” which is accurate in terms of shopping habits, and people’s film and TV viewing habits. “Popular culture allows large heterogeneous masses of people to identify collectively. It serves an inclusionary role in society as it unites the masses on ideals of acceptable forms of behaviour” Lundberg, C., & Ziakas, V. (pg 33, 2018). This is what mainstream television shows and films aim to do.



Representation is important for people, especially if they are from an ethnic or religious minority. By looking at the representation of Muslim and Jewish people on British television, common clothing themes and where the shows

are set can be studied and compared to other data. This chapter will focus on television, as it is the most easily accessible form of popular culture that allows viewers to escape from their lives. *Knott et al (2016)* investigate the history of religious representation within popular culture; “as a result of the variety of television channels and genres, there is considerable diversity of representations as well as some counter discourse”. *Morgan (2008)* also writes about the need for religious representation on TV; “religious and cultural authorities believed that religion must necessarily have a place in the television landscape, and television authorities, eager to secure a role in social and cultural life...” Therefore, this author argues, television needs to accurately represent the population of the time.

1.11 THE HIJAB AS DEPICTED ON TV

Love Productions’ highly successful and critically acclaimed show *The Great British Bake Off (GBBO)*, found a huge audience on the BBC, with seven series broadcast over six years, demonstrating the baking talents of a diverse group of home bakers. The show has since transferred to Channel Four.



Nadiya Hussain after winning Series 6 of GBBO

The winner of the 6th series of *GBBO* was Luton born Nadiya Hussain, a second-generation Bangladeshi Muslim woman, who appeared throughout the series wearing a variety of hijabs. Nadiya has gone on to become a

prominent personality on television and radio, as well as a baker. She recently presented a spin-off show for the BBC called *The Chronicles of Nadiya*, in which she explored Bangladesh through the country's food. Throughout the show she spent time reminiscing and telling viewers about her culture and experiences. In the first episode she described why she chose to wear a hijab.

On a shopping trip for a forthcoming wedding in Bangladesh she talked with her cousin about the headscarf, saying: "My religious beliefs also have an impact on what I wear, we have to make sure that the sleeves are long, make sure that it's not too fitted, and then do we have a scarf to go with it." This explains how a person's religious identity can affect their everyday choices, such as clothing.

The hijab is not something to be taken up lightly; it is a huge part of a woman's religious identity and life within Islam. "It was the first part of me finding my religion, the first act that I actually did was to cover my hair, I realised the importance and the significance," said Nadiya. She described how wearing a hijab was a visible sign of her faith. "It's the sign of being a Muslim and it's a sign of practising Islam, it's a sign of modesty and it's one of those things you do." Muslim women and most modest dressing women describe their clothing as a visible marker of their faith, which makes them feel like an advocate of that faith. This is a topic that I discussed at length with participants in this study.

Nadyia told the viewers that wearing a hijab was her own choice, something that the participants in this study echoed. "Everyone finds it in different stages of their life," said Nadiya. A large part of modest dressing for a lot of women is the covering of hair and it is one of the key topics in this study. Nadyia described its importance. "It's your modesty and covering your modesty, your hair is seen as something beautiful and you preserve that for only specific people," she said. She ended segment of the programme by saying: "I think it (wearing a hijab) strengthens my belief in who I am and the choices that I make."

Nadiya Hussain, it could be argued, is the perfect example of post-modern Britain, namely a second-generation woman, who has gone on to have a successful career doing something considered to be quintessentially and stereotypically British, baking. She has continued to make something of herself, whilst also being a positive role model for young women in general and (some could argue) a positive representative of Islam.

Muslims Like Us is another recent BBC production. The show aired in January 2017 and caused controversy as viewers disagreed with one participant's strident political and religious views. The programme aimed to show viewers what it is like to be a Muslim and what it means to be a Muslim in Britain today. Over the course of two episodes a group of Sunni, Shia, Asian, Arab and converted Muslims shared a house. The BBC said of the series: "In episode one, the ten British Muslims who represent the diversity of their faith move into their new home. As each meets and settles in, they begin to explore how their faith impacts their lives... Topical, important and, at times, charged exchanges shine a light on what it means to be a Muslim in modern Britain."



Muslims Like Us, BBC, 2017

Out of the five women on the show, two wore what could be considered 'modest dress'; English convert Saba and Arabic Humaria. The topic of modest dress came up in conversation when Abdul Hak (who could be

considered a zealot) gave Mehreen, one of the female housemates who was not wearing modest dress, a flyer about how to wear the jilbaab. Hak's reasoning for this was his belief that: "women should cover their hair, she should dress modestly, not showing all of her ornaments, the shape of her body".

Saba said the jilbaab was a 'sunnah', which is a Prophetic tradition, rather than a law or commandment. Another male participant, Mani, questioned: "Is it more important to look like a Muslim, or to feel like a Muslim?" This was an interesting and provocative point as many people agree that modesty is a way of acting, rather than a way of dressing.

Humaira explained why she chose to wear the hijab, saying: "I wear it predominantly as an act of worship. Hijab is about haya (modesty), remembering that modesty in Islam is above men and women. What that looks like now is very different to what it would have looked like in 7th century Arabia." Here she echoed the view that modesty is part of Islam, a common theme throughout this study.

1.12 PORTRAYAL OF BRITISH JEWISHNESS

The researcher chose two British television comedy shows that concentrate on Jewish families (and dinner): Channel Four's *Friday Night Dinner* and the BBC's *Grandma's House*. These shows focus less on religion, more on the Jewishness of family dynamics, with hilarious outcomes. "The Jew is an individual, whereas Jewishness is a set of identity markers associated with being a Jew or belonging to a Jewish culture, but does not necessarily have to be anchored to explicitly Jewish bodies" *Byers and Krieger (2005)*. The focal points for both of these shows are the 'Jewish Moments' as a way to represent Jewish culture. *Stratton (pg 291, 2000)* says that: "more often, though, these representations come simply as Jewish moments provided by characters of more or less indeterminate background".

Gilbert (2014) discusses British Jewish identity within these two sitcoms; it is the most up to date article to hand that discusses British TV shows, as opposed to the great majority of writing on Jewishness in pop culture, which mostly comes from America.

Friday Night Dinner (FND) is a comedy about a family coming together for Shabbat dinner. The Jewishness is never explicitly mentioned but is fairly obvious, from the challah bread on the table, to the Christmas episode where the Christmas tree is turned into a 'Hanukkah bush'.

Gilbert (2014) commented that: "Although the programme contains some Jewish signifiers — such as the North-West London suburban location, the aspirational lower-middle-class decor, the visual coding of the characters...their accents, idioms, and so on — these could be missed."



The Pyjamas - Friday Night Dinner 2016

The Jewishness of the show is highlighted by the inclusion of an outsider, the family's neighbour Jim, who is totally unaware their Jewishness, which the two sons take advantage of by telling him 'Pussface' is a traditional Jewish nickname, rather than a silly family name. Jim also repeatedly knocks on their door during the dinners, at which point the frustrated mother says: "it's Friday night, doesn't he know we're Jewish."

The Jewishness becomes more apparent in later seasons, when the Grandmother gets married in a synagogue and when there is a funeral conducted by a Rabbi. Gilbert does argue that, although not outwardly expressed, the Jewishness is alluded to throughout the four seasons of *FND*, saying: “the programme thus performs a subtle deployment of its Jewishness. It is alluded to but not often explored at an explicit level. In this way it is like the challah on the Goodmans' Friday-night dinner table: a loaf of Jewishness, out in the open, but not foregrounded.”

Grandma's House is set in the home of the main character's grandmother. Jewish comedian and actor Simon Amstell plays a fictional version of himself and the show revolves around his family's dynamics while Simon tries to find new meaning in life after quitting his previous show *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*.

Grandma's House is more niche in its portrayal of Jewishness, having a lot more 'in jokes' and references that are less likely to be understood by non-Jewish people. *Gilbert (2014)*, however, takes a different view, arguing that *FND* is more subtle and obscure with its Jewish references, while *Grandma's House* is more open with its Jewishness. The researcher disagreed with Gilbert as *Grandma's House* had more references that would only be understood by members of the religious Jewish ingroup: reading of the Jewish Chronicle and the card game kalooki.

Both these shows are set in Jewish neighbourhoods in North London, which in the case of *Grandma's House* echoes Simon's upbringing. “This domestic setting is quite specifically located in the North-East London suburb of Gants Hill, Ilford, which is where Simon Amstell and Rebecca Front (who plays his mother) were both raised in Jewish families” (*Gilbert, 2014*). The only time the family Jewishness is really talked about is when Simon invites his father, who has become a 'frumer' (an observant and religious Jew) to his grandma's house.



The Day Simon Felt the Family Was Ready to Be Healed — Grandma's House 2010

The grandfather uses Yiddish language throughout the show, such as: schmocker, little pisher, schmuck, and tuckus, which reiterate the Jewish background of the family.

In both of these shows one thing is apparent: neither features modest dress, and both focus on liberal Jewish families, who don't wear the outfits of Orthodox Hasidic Jews. But these shows do represent post-modern British Jewish families living in London. They are both comedy shows, focusing on the hilarity of family life.

One further television show that did reference and talk in great length about Jewish modest dress is *Strictly Kosher*, a 2011 ITV documentary set in a Jewish neighbourhood in Manchester, which followed the lives of the community, including a business owner, mothers and Rabbis. The discussion of Jewish women's dress happened early in the first episode, when a customer of a clothing store commented on how she wears clothes, saying: "I like to make sure that my clothes are below my elbows, my collar bone is covered and my skirts are below my knee."



Screenshots of the first episode of Strictly Kosher

The show's narrator described how clothing acts as a non-verbal way of communication amongst practising Jewish women, "how Jewish women dress shows how religious, or how 'frum' they are", while a woman's religiousness is shown through their dress and how they cover their hair. Discussion of the sheitel was brought up when the self-confessed modern orthodox mum stated: "It's not an if, why, should or anything, it is a law that happens straight after the wedding." She described the various ways in which a woman can cover her hair, saying: "It could either be a hat or a beret a wig, whatever, you are supposed to cover your hair."

1.13 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS

This chapter covered a majority of the studies aims and objectives in that it looked at the religious influences behind modesty and modest dress. This chapter explained the Jewish concepts of modesty: tzniut and the Islamic

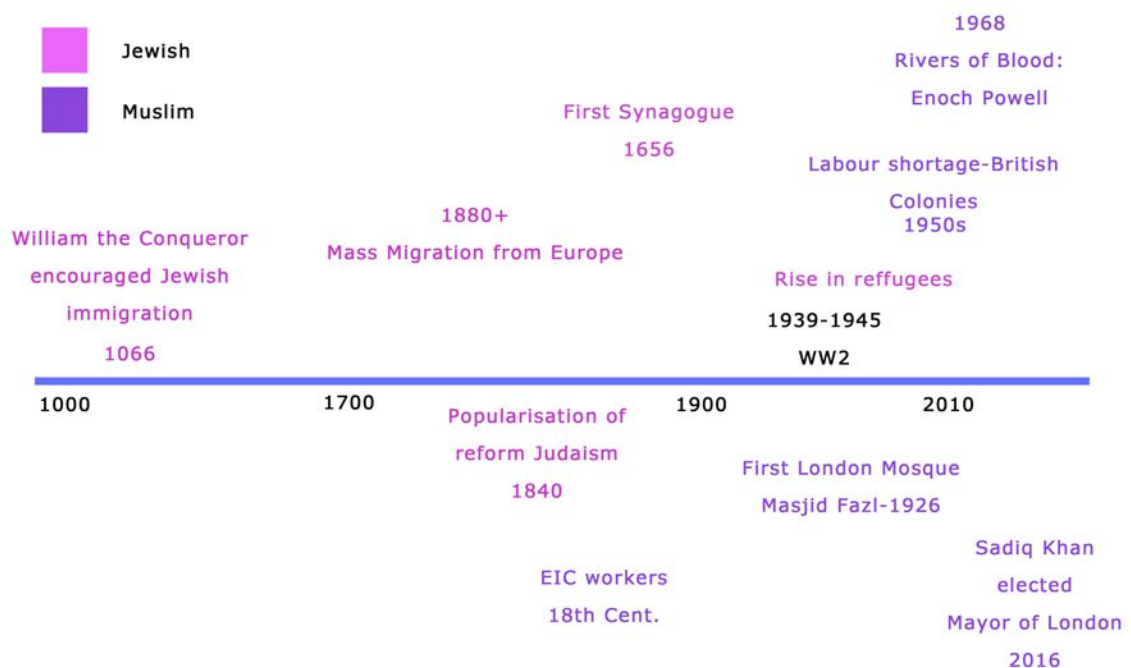
concept of modesty: haya. The links between modest religious ideologies and covering is something that was prominent as women throughout history have covered parts of their body deemed inappropriate to show. This chapter provides the necessary background context for the rest of the study as it uses existing academic research and current press to form background ideas of modesty and the religious codes of modesty. It explained the importance of group dynamics, which explained why some people wear modest clothing (to be a member of an ingroup). Dress and clothing were investigated, as it is a form of non-verbal communication, modest dressers use their clothing to communicate their faith and piety with members of ingroups and outgroups. The existing academic research into modest and modest dress was decent, but was out of date and basic.

Most research focused on Islam and discussed other countries rather than the UK. When looking for Jewish TV representation there was a distinct lack to study especially when compared to Americas booming Jewish comedies. The other noticeable absence of research was that of Jewish dress and modesty, especially within the UK, this made secondary research a bit more trying. This chapter also showed the importance of representation within popular culture, showing modest dress within a mainstream environment normalises it within a western country.

CHAPTER TWO

In order to provide geographic context to the study the demographics of London investigated and explored. This chapter gives an overview of the Jewish and Muslim demographics in London, which areas had the highest concentrations of both demographics. It was important to look at census-based research in order to later conduct observational ethnographic research. This study focuses on four main areas in London two Jewish areas: Stamford Hill and Golders Green and two Muslim areas, Hounslow and Whitechapel. The aim of this study makes clear that the focus will be within London, within concentrated and specific areas, this chapter details where these areas are.

2.1 LONDON – A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

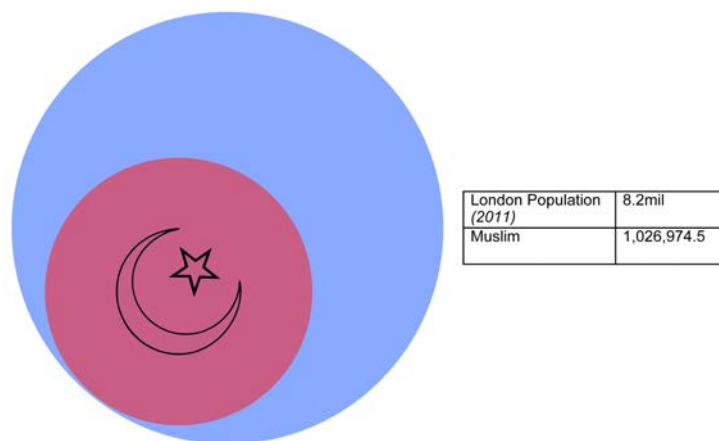
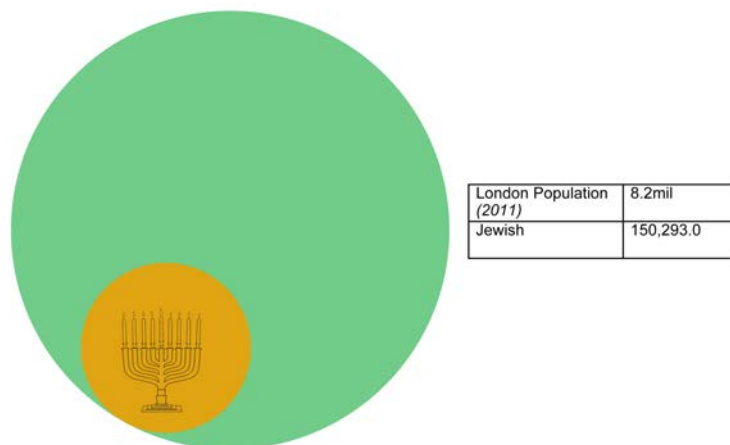


Brief immigration timeline focusing on the key points in the history of Jewish and Islamic immigration

In order to explore and understand globalisation within Britain it is important to look at religious groups, this study will focus on two religious communities: the Jewish and the Muslim communities of London. These two religions share

many commonalities, but each has their own unique history and culture within London.

According to the 2011 Census there are 1,026,974.5 Muslims living in London (37.4% of Britain's Muslims), making Islam the second most popular religion in London. The Jewish population of London is 150,293, and their religion is the third most popular.



Infographics depicting the Jewish and Islamic populations of London

2.2 AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

The ethnic and religious evolution of London can be seen through the specific Office of National Statistics (ONS) and government data, which maps the

population data of each of the 32 London Boroughs. As of 2011, across the whole of England and Wales 263,000 people identified themselves as Jewish (0.5% of the population), with London being the epicentre of Jewish people. “London also had the highest proportion of other religions including Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish” (ONS, 2011). Jewish people have a long history within London, going back hundreds of years; “in London, the main movement was north, along the new Underground lines to the newly established suburbs of Golders Green and Edgware, as well as east to Redbridge and Ilford. By the 1970s, settlement had extended as far north as the green belt area of Radlett” *Visit Jewish London (2011)*. Most of these areas still have a high percentage of Jews living there, a topic discussed later in this chapter.

2.3 JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish community is more diverse than initially thought, as within the Jewish community there are three main groups: the Ashkenazi Jews, who come from Eastern Europe; the Sephardic, who traditionally are from Spain; and Mirahzi, who are from the Middle East. The three main denominations within the Jewish faith are: Orthodox, Reform and Conservative. Orthodox is considered the most traditional denomination with many considering themselves Haredi. Reform Judaism is the most liberal, and Conservative is both traditional and liberal. It is paramount to understand that they’re different denominations of all religions as each has its own codes and conventions to adhere to. Liberal and Reform Jews were interviewed, but the study also takes Orthodox Jewish dress into consideration, as it is the most traditional, and in some areas is considered the norm.

In the 2011 Census 263,000 people identified themselves as Jewish in England and Wales, making it the 5th most practiced religion. The Jewish population is much more concentrated in specific areas of London, while the Muslim population is more spread out — across West, North West and East London. The Jewish population spreads from Central up to North London, with a heavily concentrated population in the East. There is a concentration of

Jewish people in the London Borough of Barnet, with 20.5% of the country's Jewish population living there. The 2011 Census states: "There is a concentration of Jewish people in the London borough of Barnet and Hertsmere in the East of England, 15.2% and 14.3% of the population respectively."

Within the Borough of Barnet is Golders Green, one of the most Jewish areas of the UK. "...Barnet is itself subdivided into 21 neighbourhoods (or wards) of which the most Jewishly populous is Golders Green; indeed with 7,661 Jews (37%), Golders Green is the most Jewishly populous neighbourhood in the country" *Graham (2013)*. Golders Green is a great example of hybridised London, with Mirahzi Kosher shops and cafes, as well as Middle Eastern supermarkets and Asian restaurants, it is a place discussed in further detail within this study's findings.



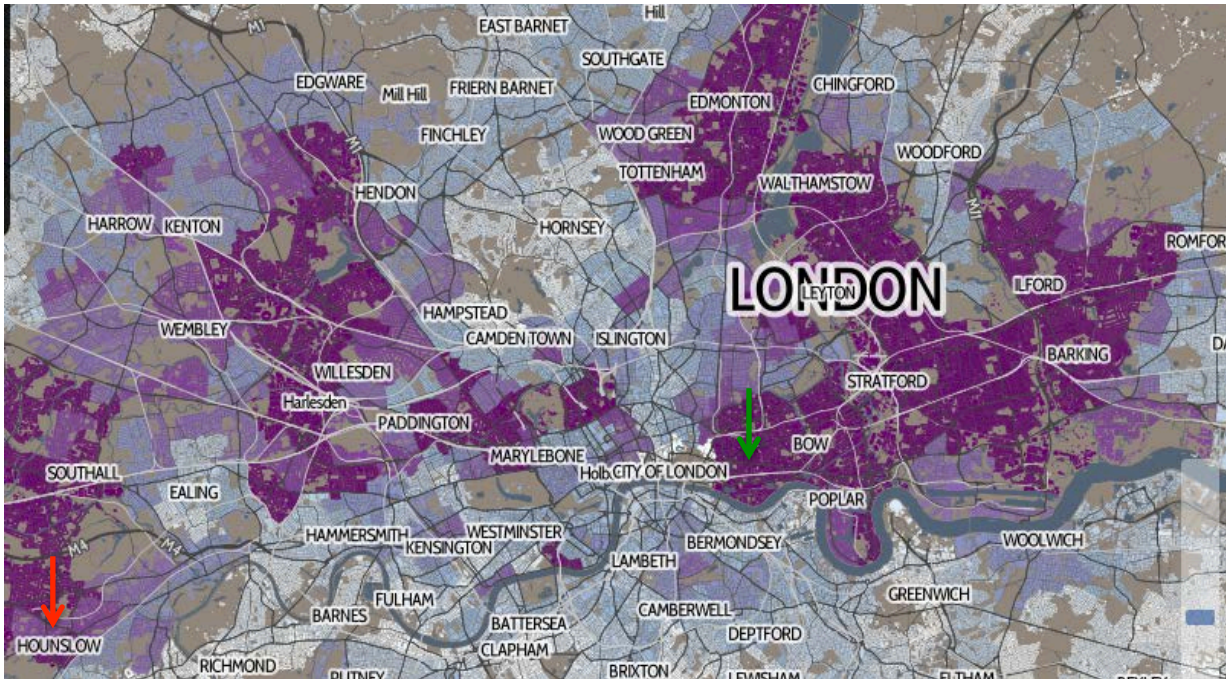
Infographic showing where in London the most Jewish people live with blue arrow showing Golders Green and orange arrow showing Stamford Hill

The borough of Hackney, East London, has one of the largest concentrations of Orthodox Jewish people in Britain; "Hackney has the largest group of Haredi Jewish people in Europe who predominately live in the North East of the borough and represent an estimated 7.4% of the borough's overall

population” *A Profile of Hackney, its People and Place (2016)*. Many of the traditionally Jewish areas in the UK have declined in population, but by contrast the *Haredi* community of Seven Sisters (East London) has grown; “doubled its size, growing by an astonishing 7.3% per year on average since 2001” (*Graham, 2013*). The Jewish population of Haringey focuses on Stamford Hill, an extremely traditional Haredi Orthodox community, with kosher shops, synagogues and Hebrew/Yiddish schools; it is this specific area that will be explored within the findings.

2.4 MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Most second and third generation Muslims living in London are direct descendants of original 1950s immigrants. It is these descendants that have the religion and culture of their parents, but have hybridised with English cultures; “the generation of Muslims that have been educated in Britain have much stronger relationships with non-Muslims than their ancestors.” (*BBC, 2009*) The first big wave of Muslim migration to the UK and to London was during the 1950s and 60s, with Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis immigrating to find work or escaping violence in their home countries. London’s Muslim community is incredibly diverse, with many originating from Turkey, Somalia, India and Pakistan; “the number of Muslims increased in all ethnic groups particularly Asian Muslims. Pakistani Muslims increased by 371,000 (from 658,000 to 1,000,000) and the Bangladeshi Muslim population has grown by 142,000 (from 260,000 to 402,000).” (*ONS Census, 2011*). “Muslims form 12.4% of London’s population,” Islam is becoming an increasingly diverse religion in the UK with; “68% Asian (1.83 million of 2.71 million) and 32% non-Asian. 1 in 12 is of White ethnicity (8% of the Muslim population)” (*ONS Census, 2011*), which leads to further integration and communication between ethnicities and cultures.



Infographic showing where in London Muslims live with red showing Hounslow and green showing Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets had the highest proportion of Muslims at 34.5% (over seven times the national figure) having increased from 71,000 in 2001 (19%) to 88,000 in 2011. Tower Hamlets' population is mainly Bangladeshi, with a majority of Bangladeshi people in London being Muslims; "the areas with the highest proportion of Muslims were in London with the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham having 34.5% and 32.0% respectively, and Redbridge and Waltham Forest having proportions of the population higher than 20%." There are of course other areas in which many Muslims live; Ealing (16%) and Hounslow (14%) being two main boroughs.

2.5 SEGREGATION IN THE CAPITAL

London might be the most multicultural city in the UK, but it is argued to be one of the most segregated cities, with the then Commissioner for Racial Equality Trevor Phillips commenting: "and here is where I think we are: we are sleepwalking our way to segregation. We are becoming strangers to each other, and we are leaving communities to be marooned outside the

mainstream” *Phillips (2005)*. Communities and neighbourhoods are becoming more divided as the rise in immigration in cities continues. This evidence of a segregated London supports the importance of this study as it provides an overview on these possibly segregated areas.

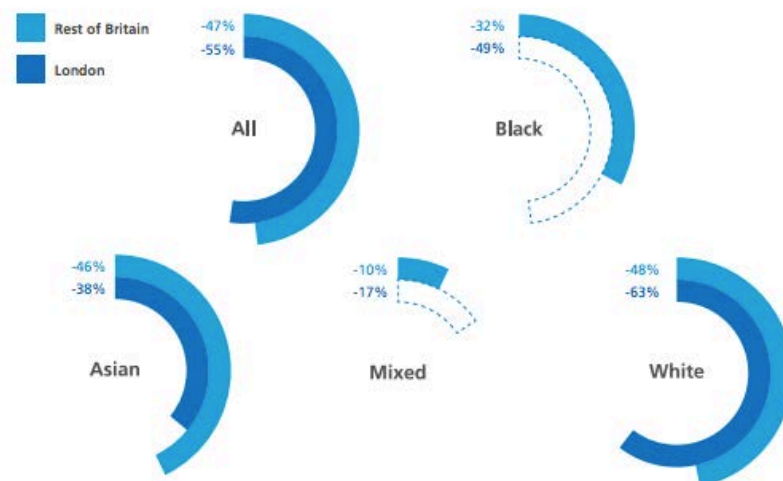


Figure 12: Level of ethnic integration across ethnicities for London and rest of Britain
 Per cent indicates level of reduced interactions between people compared to no social segregation.

Cantle & Kaufmann (2016) describe the possible reasons for the segregation in some areas; “segregation has been linked to prejudice and intolerance of the ‘other’ due to the lack of contact and interaction across social and cultural boundaries.” The lack of interaction with the ‘other’ in certain neighbourhoods in London is what can promote fear and segregation, this can be seen in specific London areas where mixing with non-members is discouraged, such as in Stamford Hill.

Increased segregation is in part down to white families actively avoiding areas with ethnic minorities living there. Increasing segregation takes place in a society that has become more diverse, with the average percentage of white British people dropping from 86.8% to 79.8% in the same time period. These figures demonstrate that the white British majority are becoming more isolated from minorities, by moving away from urban areas and into suburbs.

McDermott (2015) disagreed with the idea that London is “sleepwalking into segregation”. He commented that: “Diversity in the capital is no longer defined by pockets of large, isolated ethnic groups but by more mixing and less segregation.” McDermott’s claims about the spreading diversity in London are backed up by the simple fact that the current generation of Millennials is the most diverse and multicultural generation yet.

The study of integration and segregation within London is paramount, as it indicates the movement of people within a multicultural city. Integration, whilst being a positive within this study, has to be contrasted and studied in conjunction with the segregation witnessed in some areas of London. This background research into the make-up of London provides context for the rest of the study, especially as some of the more segregated communities will be visited.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides justification for focusing on London (Stamford Hill, Golders Green, Hounslow and Whitechapel) as well as detailing a part of the aim, which was to focus on London. It details the ethnic diversity of both Judaism and Islam, which influences a woman’s dress.

This chapter was key in identifying specific areas to investigate and observe as well as justifying why they were chosen. It was important to create ethnic and religious maps of London to give full context behind London’s unique global mix and to provide evidence of London being the most multicultural city in the UK. This chapter sets about the data for the entire study as the rest of the chapter’s reference these specific areas in London and the specific religious data. Participants later in the study reference some of these key religious areas, and some were from these areas, which proves relevance of the four areas looked at within this study.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the various research methods this study uses when collecting and analysing data. The basis of this methodology chapter is to define the various forms of data collection methods that were used in this study. Explanations of the procedures are gone through as well as providing justification of qualitative methods. Qualitative and observational methods are discussed in great depth in this chapter, as these are the predominant methods used within this study, which is outlined in the aims.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS

As one of the study aims describes qualitative methods were the primary method of research in this study, as it allows for more in-depth analysis of dress and clothing. Kawamura is a key figure in the study of dress; she details why qualitative research is the best method when looking into dress and clothing. This study will explore religious identity, and the effects on women's dress, which was achieved through a combination of secondary data and primary research. Conversational semi-structured interviews took place, as well as secondary research (archives and documents). It was ethnographic, as it focuses on exploring different cultures, ethnicities and religions within different boroughs of London.

"Qualitative analysis refers to analysis that is not based on precise measurement and mathematical claims. Fashion/dress related analysis is frequently qualitative because research goals often involve the understanding of phenomena in ways that do precise measurements." *Kawamura (pg 39, 2011)*

Qualitative methods were used because one of the main objectives of this study was exploring the perceptions of modesty that two different religious groups hold. A decent cross section of people were interviewed about their religious identity and the effects this has on their dress, and the best way to do this was to use a qualitative method. This method allowed for in-depth knowledge gathering from the participant's personal experiences, which formed a narrative. "Through narrative inquiry, you gain access to the personal experiences of the storyteller who frames, articulates, and reveals life as experiences in a narrative structure we call a story" *deMarrais, Lapan (pg 105, 2004)*. Using qualitative methods within this study allows for comprehensive data collection and amalgamation, making it clear what the similarities amongst participants are.

"Ethnography is a process of gathering systematic observations, partly through participation and partly through various types of conversational interviews along with photography, archival searches and assorted documents." *Kawamura (pg 52, 2011)*

Handwerker (pg 12, 2001) also describes the importance of additional data; "complementary data may come from focus group interviews and observations and from unpublished and published texts, including diaries, letters, historical documents..."

Kawamura (2011) details the importance of ethnographic methods when researching dress; "ethnography offers approaches for analysing clothing and body ornament that stem from the study of the technological and cultural roots of specific peasant and small-scale communities, and this is an anthropological understanding of ethnography that plays an important role in methods in understanding culture". Looking into the cultural background of participants is imperative as it can affect the clothing that they choose to wear today, especially if they are from non-western cultures; "...the method

of ethnography can be adopted in studying western or non-western fashion/dress”.

Conversational semi-structured interviews are beneficial in ethnographic studies; “...unstructured interviews are used in ethnography... no fixed order or wording to any questions. Any type of language can be used” (Kawamura, 2011). Interview questions were drafted before interviews, so as to keep track of topics and the main elements of the study, but if the participants brought up an interesting topic of conversation, it could be continued and explored further. What must be kept in mind is that any form of data collection could be subconsciously influenced, as participants will take the researcher into account. “When the research subject becomes aware of the presence of an ethnographer, he or she may change his or her behaviour, and it may no longer be his or her everyday routine behaviour or comments” *Kawamura (2011)*.

Before the interviews took place, observational research was conducted around specific areas in London. Doing this not only refreshed basic knowledge on religious beliefs and local customs but also allowed for modest dress observation. This preliminary background research allowed for insight from an ingroup perspective, despite being a member of an outgroup.

As this study uses interactive methods to form in depth research into modesty, sensitivity was always used, especially when visiting religious sites and communicating within groups. Hardwerker (2001) discusses the importance of sensitivity within ethnographic studies; “ethnography thus calls for the personal sensitivity and creativity to allow people to feel comfortable with you; it requires that you communicate clearly to people whom you ask for assistance that you are nonthreatening”.

The use of observational methods is a key element within this study, making it relevant and providing up to geographical data.

“These observations help researchers to gain geographic bearing; learn what is commonly

worn; and discover age, gender, and class differences in clothing, appearance and use of space.” Schensul, LeCompte, & Schensul (1999).

The researcher visited key areas in London in which to observe the modest clothing codes of each area. Chapter 4 details the findings of these observations in Stamford Hill, Hounslow, Whitechapel and Golders Green.

“For anthropologists and social scientists, participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people...” DeWalt, & DeWalt, (2011)

As well as observing people in busy public settings the researcher also took part rituals and events involving modest dressing women. This high level of observation has given the researcher a unique insight into modest dressing communities and has been a large part of answering one of the aims; “to use observational methods to establish key modesty codes”.

3.2 POPULATION

The participants for this study were chosen carefully because of their unique life experiences to do with modesty and clothing; “the researcher chooses participants who possess knowledge of the subject because of their life experiences” (Morse, 1999).

The two ingroups acknowledged in this study were the London ingroup (all the participants were from London) and the religious ingroup (all the participants were members of a religion). The researcher could not remain a bias spectator and be part of both ingroups, which is why they were an outsider to the religious ingroup and an insider for the London ingroup. Being an insider allowed for unique knowledge of London’s multicultural landscape, as well as providing access to the two religious groups looked at in this study.

As a member of the outside community the researcher was a member of the larger out-group. This position as a member of the out-group allowed me to act like an impartial observer. The researcher was an outsider in terms of religion by not associating with any form of organised religion, which allowed them to comment from an observer's perspective. Being ethnically mixed made the researcher have something in common with the study participants, which helped them to 'open up' and trust the interviewer, as well as encouraging interesting conversations. The participants and the researcher had *some* shared experiences that were discussed, which led to some informative conversations.



Infographic detailing ingroups and outgroups with regards to the author

The above graph details the similarities between the participants and the researchers ethnicity (being multi-ethnic), but it also details that they were a member of an outgroup, by having no religious identity.

3.3 LOCATION

Non-biased ethnographic observation fieldwork was conducted in Hounslow, Golders Green, Whitechapel and Stamford Hill. These areas were chosen according to ONS census data, which informed this study on the religious statistics and borough demographics that showed these four boroughs were some of the most religious. These boroughs had the highest demographics of either Jewish or Muslim women.

Participants that were interviewed in person were met at their convenience close to their places of work around London. Phone interviews were predominantly taken place again at the convenience of participants in the comfort of their homes in London.

3.4 RESTRICTIONS

Being a member of the outgroup for this study meant that the researcher could be seen as untrustworthy or even have a bias towards a particular group, which is why it is crucial to conduct basic research beforehand. Not seeing participants face-to-face meant that the researcher could not see the participants clothing, which could have presented good examples of modest dress.

Religion was discussed in this study it was important for the researcher to remain impartial towards participants. Although the researcher held no religious beliefs, it is important to note that being brought up in the UK meant that they had grown up in a Christian country, and could have unconscious biases. However, being from a culturally diverse family allowed them to be particularly sympathetic and understanding towards people of different cultures and religions.

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Shabbat dinners organised by community group Moishe House helped the researcher to build trust from within the both the Jewish and Muslim groups being studied. These introductions to the ingroup led to initial interviews, which then led to existing participants to introduce the researcher to other participants; this was how snowball sampling was brought into effect in this study.

The method for identifying participants was snowball sampling:

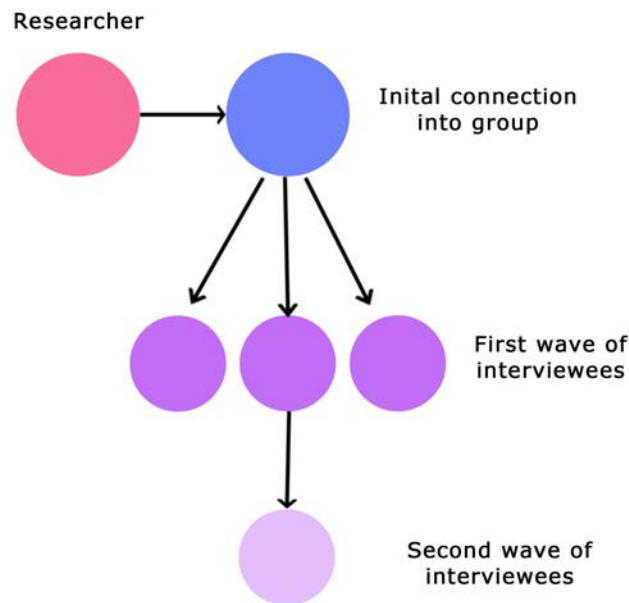
“Snowball sampling is arguably the most widely employed method of sampling in qualitative research in various disciplines across the social sciences.” (Noy, 2006)

This method is appropriate for studying closed groups, as it enables an interviewer to develop a network of participants through building trust with individuals within that group. By becoming a member of the ingroup the researcher forged trust amongst participants who would then introduce me to other participants for further conversations and research.

The researcher was welcome to attend Shabbat dinners (*figure 6*), which presented excellent opportunities to discuss Judaism with guests. These preliminary meetings were vital and gave the researcher a strong insight into this group, which allowed them to take a more informal approach to the initial stages of research.

It was through the contact network developed at the Shabbat dinners that the researcher was referred to two Muslim women who would participate in the study. This word-of-mouth contact reflects the multiculturalism of both London and the liberal Jewish network that the researcher had become part of. Being

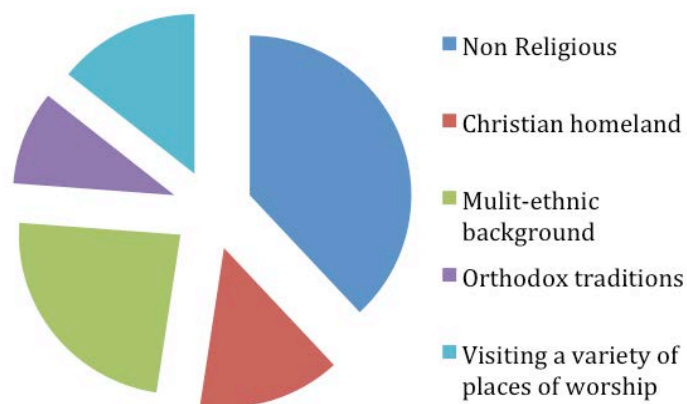
referred to participants was proof of the trust within the group that the researcher had developed.



Infographic showing the method of snowball sampling that was used

3.6 PROCEDURES

In order to avoid bias within research it was integral to approach the subject with neutrality and understanding. Bias is; “a conscious or unconscious attitude towards an individual or group that can be interpreted as a (positive or negative) prejudice and that may be manifested in behaviour as discrimination” *Chandler et al (2011)*.



The author's possible biases detailed in this infographic

It was thought that the Jewish community would be hard to gain access to, especially without any prior Jewish contacts or acquaintances. However, after initial contact with Jewish academics, the researcher gained introductions to community group Moshie House, who host weekly Shabbat dinners. At one of these dinners, the researcher heard a talk from an ex-orthodox Jew, which provided a unique and rare insight into a secular society, which is further examined within the findings.

Recruiting Muslim women to participate in this research proved harder than initially expected. After visiting a London mosque it became apparent that, coming from outside of the community, it would be more difficult to make contact with insiders. Despite wearing appropriate modest clothing for visiting this religious place of worship the researcher felt out of place. Whilst preparing to visit the mosque the researcher made sure to wear loose layers and long jeans, as well as a headscarf, which made them identify with the modest dressers that are the focus of this study.



The researcher wearing modest dress whilst visiting a London Mosque

Each participant was given a 'participant letter' (appendix 2), which explained the study and what to expect during the interview. Participants were allowed to discontinue the interview at any time and the researcher provided participants with contact details, in case they had any further questions they wished to ask, after the interview. Each participant was asked the same set of questions (appendix 3), but as the interviews were semi-structured it meant that some questions were amended to fit the individual, or re-ordered depending on the interview. They then had to sign a consent form (appendix 11), giving the researcher permission to publish their words.

Interviews were semi-structured meaning that new questions could be asked as the interviews progressed, developing the line of enquiry in direct response to the participant.

- First the interviews explored the participant's background (growing up, family, job, setting the scene for why they wear what they do).
- They were asked about their religious identity and how devout they consider themselves.
- The participant's interpretation of modesty was questioned at length
- Where they purchased their clothes and what they wear daily.

Interviews took place between January and March 2017, after initial participants were found through professional pre-existing contacts. Using a professional network to identify possible participants allowed the researcher to build trust with the study group. This trust was crucial as it led to me embedding within two communities who helped with further participant referrals. Having members of these communities refer further participants was proof of the trust developed between the researcher and the ingroup. Members of the ingroups acted as guides, and recommended further people to speak to and topics to look into; this was an invaluable source of information.

The interviews that were conducted in person allowed for more in-depth research that can only be gained face-to-face with someone (through their gestures and visuals). The interviews were conversational, as topics depended on what the participants answered; they were in a comfortable environment, which allowed them to open up more. Interviewing participants without seeing them also meant there was no visual bias that could come from the dress that they were wearing, making the interviews more objective.

3.7 MATERIALS

With three of the participants, specific times and dates were arranged for phone interviews, and they granted the researcher permission (agreed pre-interview) to have the interviews recorded. Interviews were recorded using an app (ACR on Android), which was then saved onto the Huddersfield University system. The benefits of phone interviews were that they could be fitted around participant's schedules. They were also a more discreet method of interview that allowed the participants to feel more comfortable when talking about possibly sensitive topics.

3.8 VARIABLES

This study focused on Jewish and Muslim women between the ages of 20-50, who were currently residing, or had grown up, in London. This age was selected because all participants were adults and could confidently identify their own religious identity.

The way participants were brought up was a major variable, where they brought up in a religious household? did they attend a faith school? Did they have strict parents? All these elements have effected how participants perceive modesty and modest clothing.

Participants own religious identity was a factor in how they perceived modesty and how they interpreted this through clothing. The links between participant's

religiosity and interpretations of modesty is something discussed at length within the findings.

3.9 STATISTICAL TREATMENT

In order to accurately analyse the qualitative data collected content analysis was used. "Content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessary from an author's or user's perspective" (pg 11, Krippendorff, 2013).

This form of statistical analysis uses the narrative content gathered from the interviews to produce simple and clear to read results. "Qualitative content analysis is often used to test hypotheses, and, because of this, entire coding frames may be built in a concept-driven way, and the coding frame is always tried out on material that is different from the material used in the main study" Flick (2013).

Content analysis proved effective for this study, as it required multidimensional study of participants and the subject matter. The secondary, primary and observational research conducted all helped to answer the overall aim of this study. Flick (2013) describes what is required of the researcher when conducting content analysis; "it requires the researcher to focus on selected aspects of meaning, namely those aspects that relate to the overall research question."

It is vital to look at the broader context of the study in order to understand this studies aim; women's interpretation of modesty and what informs this..."...Qualitative content analysis is also applied to latent and more context-dependent meaning" Flick, 2013. As well as interviewing participants local areas and people were observed to aim a wider context of the concepts of modesty.

"The coding frame is at the heart of the method. It consists of at least one main category and at least two subcategories" Flick, 2013. In order to clearly show the categories discovered through interview various graphs and

diagrams were created showing the collation between different topics found in the interviewing process.

3.10 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the pros of using ethnographic methods for this type of study, as this included observation. Snowball sampling was used for this study and is something discussed within the findings, this method was important as it allowed the researcher to gain trust within communities. The techniqueal side of the study was debated, the materials that were used and the restrictions that the researcher faced conducting whilst interviewing participants and finding participants.

This chapter provided justification for the research methods that were used in this study, including how statistical analysis of the findings, and where the participants were from. The graphs within this chapter uniquely illustrate the justifications for the methods used.

As detailed in the methodology observational methods are integral for a multifaceted ethnographic study. This chapter describes the clothing worn in Whitechapel, Golders Green, Hounslow and Stamford Hill through the researchers first hand observations. The key points that were commented on were the colours of the clothing, the length, local trends and styles. In order to gain a wider view of the modest clothing in both Jewish and Muslim areas conservative and liberal areas were compared so as to form a broader idea of the modest dress off London.

4.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH: THE GEOGRAPHY OF CLOTHING, A FIRST HAND OBSERVATION

Modest dressing offers a visual representation of multiculturalism in London, the hybridisation of colourful veils and long layered silhouettes contrast with the somewhat dull and homogenous British high street.

“In many cases, it provides the aesthetic focal point of a young woman’s appearance. Such scarf-led outfits, known by many as hijabi fashions, often lend a splash of colour and light to the grey uniformity of British high streets and university corridors.” *Tarlo (2007)*

Tarlo’s ethnographic studies focus on the modest dress of Muslims in London, and whilst she discusses the religious dress in different areas, there is far more focus on Muslim women’s dress.

As an ethnographic investigative study of the modest dress of women, this section will include my first hand observation of modest dress in areas highlighted as religious in the 2011 Census. Murchison, 2010 discusses the importance of observational research within an ethnographic study; “the element of personal experience and social or cultural empathy can be very

powerful for the ethnographer”. As this study is visual it is important to gain insights in the real clothing that Muslim and Jewish women wear day-to-day. It allowed the researcher a unique insight into the communities discussed within this study. There were crossovers found of modest codes as well as similarities between both communities.

OBSERVATION STUDIES IN LONDON NEIGHBOURHOODS

4.2 GOLDERS GREEN (LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET)

VISITED FOR TWO HOURS IN THE AFTERNOON IN EARLY FEBRUARY 2017

As mentioned in a previous chapter (area demographics) Golders Green is one of the largest Jewish areas in London. It is also a richly diverse area with a wide variety of Mirahzi and Sephardi Jews as well as Iranians, Turks and Eastern Europeans. The culture of the Middle East is shown through the dress of the Mirahzi Jews in this area, it is less homogeneous and far more varied than other areas.

Sitting in a busy Sephardi Kosher café provided an excellent viewpoint to watch a wide variety of people walk along the high street. The high street was bustling with Jewish and non-Jewish people alike, so this high street was an excellent example of multicultural multi-ethnic London.



The highstreet

Style

There were visible layers worn by the women, where they had clearly bought a short-sleeved top and put a long one underneath, to keep it kosher. Layers were key and were a trend in this area, with plenty of women using long layers to hide their body shape. They wore long skirts (past knees or just to the knee), some were loose, and others were much more fitted.



Photograph taken by author of modern Jewish dress



Screenshot from Google maps of a couple of Jewish women wearing modest clothing. An example of layering

Long coats were worn due to the weather, with some puffer and parka style coats, but there were also more tailored wool coats and jackets being worn. There were a lot of practical black shoes worn, with the occasional trainers and Ugg boots being paired with leggings and skirts. Skirts were always worn on top of black leggings or thick tights. Jewish women were seen going into a discount clothing store, which upon closer inspection did have plenty of accidentally modest clothes.



Photograph taken by author of discount store

Colour

Darker colours were the main focus, with black, brown and grey being the most predominant. But there were also plenty of colourful and patterned outfits, with dark red, green and blue, as well as black and white patterns.



A screenshot from Google Maps showing young Jewish women wearing a variety of colours

4.3 STAMFORD HILL (LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY)

VISITED IN MID-MARCH AND AGAIN IN AUGUST 2017.

Despite also being a Jewish neighbourhood, Stamford Hill is completely different to Golders Green. As mentioned in Chapter 2 the community is predominantly strict Haredi orthodox, with their own shops, schools and rules. The style is more homogenous than Golders Green, but there are subtle differences in styles and unique elements to each outfit. Often referred to as a 'black hat' community, this Jewish community is staunchly independent of outside influences despite it being in the multicultural borough of Hackney.



A screenshot from Google Maps street view of Clapton Common Road in Stamford Hill

Styles

The dominant style around the area was long puffer coats, with hoods. These coats came in a variety of styles, some floor length, others cropped slightly. These coats were clearly practical, as they offered a warm and waterproof layer as women were going about their daily tasks that conformed to the laws of modesty.

Only skirts were worn in Stamford Hill as most orthodox women believe that wearing trousers is wearing men's clothes, which is forbidden in the Torah:

“A man's attire shall not be on a woman, nor may a man wear a woman's garment because whoever does these [things] is an abomination to the Lord, your God.” *Deuteronomy 22:5*



Google Maps screenshots of two women wearing long skirts and jackets- a trend in this area

The skirts were always below the knee and were not tight fitting (figure 9), worn with opaque skin colour or black tights, which was a trend spotted on most women. The shoes they wore with these tights were plain black shoes or boots (a lot were elasticated, so that they could be worn during the Shabbat). Another major trend specific to Stamford Hill is the shietal, a distinguishing feature amongst married women. These wigs were in dark colours, and short styles were either worn alone or with accessories. The main accessories were fascinators or headbands worn over the wigs, some women also wore hats. These accessories would sometimes be coordinated with the rest of their

outfit, matching the colour. Unmarried women/young girls tied their hair back in very simple ponytails and hair clips and wore no make up.

Colour

The colours were mainly dark with the occasional dark cranberry or forest green. Some women co-ordinated their skirts with a top or coat, so that they would be wearing the same colour throughout their outfit. Black and brown were the main colours in this area but some women had started to wear blue, green, dark red, aubergine and beige.

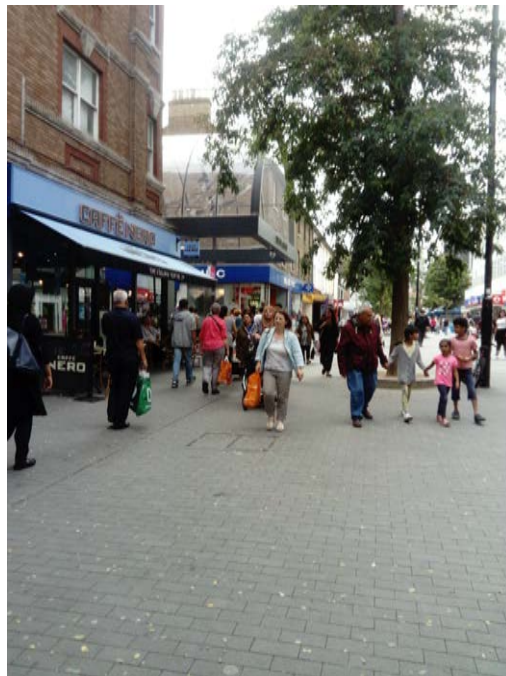


Venn diagram comparing the modest clothing of two Jewish areas

Comparing the styles of Golders Green with Stamford Hill acted as a visual example of the differences between the different Jewish sects. Both held similar ideals of modesty, but Stamford Hill was far more homogenous than Golders Green. There were brighter colours and more variety in the styles of the clothing in Golders Green compared to the darker, longer silhouette in Stamford Hill. The modest clothing of both areas was used to communicate to both the religious ingroup and the non religious outgroup, it acts as visual protection; Heath (2008); "...it is her tzniuth [sic] clothing, her sacred covering, which not only publicises her religious intentions and identity but serves as symbolic protection against the unwelcome outside influences of the non-Jewish secular society..."

4.4 HOUNSLOW (LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW) VISITED IN FEBRUARY AND AUGUST 2017.

Hounslow is a very hybridised borough with a mixture of Sikhs and Muslims from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Middle East, as discussed in Chapter 2. As it was raining on the first visit in February, people had long warm coats on, which made looking at the clothes of Muslim women difficult, but there were enough visible key elements to gauge the local trends. On the second visit in the summer when the weather was warmer, there were much more colours on display.



Hounslow high street

Shapes and styles

Hijabs were the predominant style, but there were plenty of jilbaabs. Abayas were also popular and were layered either under more western clothes (hoodies or jackets) or paired with patterned hijabs. Most headscarfs were in a more traditional hijab style (each folded according to their wearer's unique style), but younger women sometimes wore a turban style. The turbans were twisted around their heads in different ways, some with voluminous larger turbans and hijabs and others much neater and tucked in.

A lot of younger women wore skinny or loose jeans or long loose skirts, with layers (jackets, cardigans and coats); girls who were wearing school uniform wore black hijabs. Some women wore salwar kameez, which echoed the ethnic diversity of both Islam and the borough of Hounslow. Women focused on loose layers, mixing western clothes with more traditional Islamic clothes, while jeans and leggings were worn with abayas and parker coats. Jeans tended not to be worn alone; they were always layered with other clothing, echoing the more conservative Jewish belief that trousers can be deemed immodest as they allude to a woman's private parts, which is why long layers were worn to cover this area. Unlike Judaism, jeans and leggings are much more commonplace and were seen on many women. There were long dresses and skirts worn with long tops or jackets.



Google screenshots of women wearing modest dress in various colours

Trainers were popular with younger women, with others wearing ankle boots with small heels. Older women wore more functional and sensible shoes that were black and chunky.

Colours

The most predominant colours were purples and blacks, but the most popular pattern was leopard print as it was incorporated into scarfs and hijabs. Women showed the most colours and patterns through scarfs and hijabs, which contrasted with the (sometimes) darker colours of the rest of their outfits. Paisley was also spotted, as well as Burberry printed scarfs. Black and white and leopard print was also a trend spotted on hijabs. The shalwar

kameez's of some women were in bright colours, red, yellow and gold, which contrasted with the darker, more muted tones of some abayas. Coordination was key; abayas were paired with similar coloured scarfs and coats.



Google screenshot of colourful shalwar kameez

4.5 WHITECHAPEL (LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS)

VISITED MARCH 2017

Tower Hamlets is a much more Muslim area than Hounslow, with Muslims making up 38% of the borough, compared with 17% in Hounslow. There are 64 mosques and religious centres in the borough, along with a street market in Whitechapel High Street selling a variety of headscarfs and modest clothing.



Photographs taken by the author of Whitechapel market stalls

Style

There were a wide variety of examples of modest dress in Tower Hamlets. The younger generation of Muslim women (15-30 years old) mixed more western clothes with the more traditional hijabs. Jeans and long thin jackets were layered to create elegant and modest silhouettes. This is the most popular trend, and an example of how non-modest wear can be worn as modest clothing. Office workers wore loose or tailored trousers, paired with shirts and cardigans. Hijabs were worn in a variety of styles, some longer and more draped, others more conservative and worn in a popular turban style. The voluminous hijabs were also spotted around this area, a unique effect created by folding layers of scarfs around one's head. Abayas were popular, sometimes layered with a jilbaab and a scarf. These were loose and billowed around women, showing nothing of their bodies, a majority of wearers were North African. The modest dress differentiated between different cultures and ethnicities, as well as religiousness. South Asian Muslims wore more patterns and colours with long scarfs worn as hijabs. Tower Hamlets was where the most niqabs were seen. Long, layered and loose, these cloak-like coverings were in the minority, but six women were seen wearing them.



Google screenshots of more conservative modest dress

Colours

Lots of bright colours of hijabs contrasted the dark of the abayas and jilbaabs in Tower Hamlets. These scarfs were co-ordinated with the rest of some

women's outfits, so there would be a multi-tonal outfit in grey or purple. Popular patterns in Whitechapel were similar to Hounslow — stripes, paisley and leopard print. The trend of neutral colours has trickled into modest dress — beige, grey, cream and brown were popular.

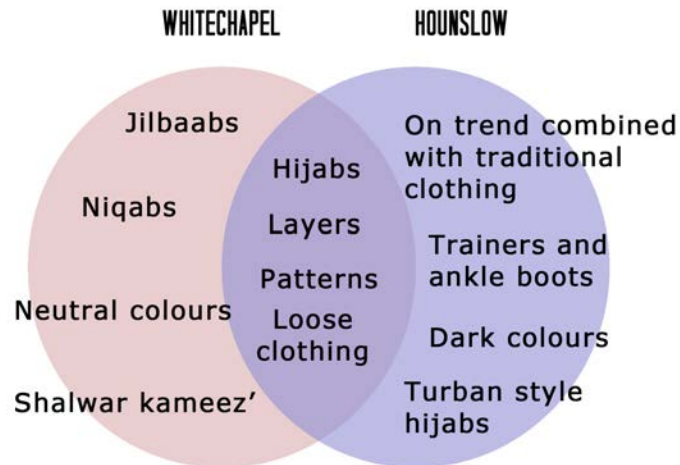


Purple was a predominate colour

Similarly to the Jewish comparisons both these areas shared parallel ideals on modesty, heads were still covered as well as the chest but some of the styles differed depending on the area. There were more niqabs worn in Whitechapel than Hounslow, which reflected the more conservative and traditional environment of Tower Hamlets. The more popular and modern trend of turban style hijabs was more visible in Hounslow than Whitechapel where people still preferred the more traditional headscarf hijab.

4.6 OBSERVATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

This chapter answers not only the overarching aim of this study but also the first objective, which was to establish key modesty codes through observational research. It was imperative to compare each observed area, so that trends and patterns around modest dress were formed.



Venn diagram comparing the modest clothing of two different Muslim areas

This observational chapter made modest clothing trends much more clear, both religions had commonalities including layering and loose clothing. The colours were another common code that was picked up on, the predominant colours were neutral and dark, this could have been down to not wanting to 'stand out' or because of the colder weather.

The more conservative or religious the area (Stamford Hill or Whitechapel) the more covered religious women are. Conducting these observations meant that the researcher knew and understood the areas demographics more clearly and could speak to participants about trends that they had noticed. It was important to compare a more conservative/traditional area with a more liberal area in both the Jewish and Muslim observations, as this way a wide cross section of women could be analysed. Observing in four areas allowed for better understanding of the possible outside influences the women had for their dress: age, ethnicity and culture were some predominate influences found, religion was not the only source of influence for these women.

As discussed within the methodology chapter participants were selected using snowball sampling and the interviews were analysed using content analysing methods. This findings chapter details the questions that participants were asked as well as describing the characteristics of the participants. The data collected from the interviews is then broken down into topics using methods discussed within the methodology. There is an important discussion with an ex-orthodox Jewish woman within this chapter, which adds a unique and insightful aspect into the study.

5.1 PARTICIPANTS

Gaining trust within ingroups was imperative for gaining participants for this study, something that is discussed in the Methodology (Chapter 3). Being seen as trustworthy gave the researcher access to participants and groups, which encouraged the participants to provide in-depth information on their identity and dress. *Kawamura (pg 49, 2011)* describes the possible issues in gaining entry to participants within communities: “gaining entry into a site/community is the very first step of ethnography. But in ethnography there is always a problem of getting entry into a group that you are studying”. When investigating a specific group of people it was integral to study each ingroup’s culture, traditions and beliefs beforehand, so as to understand possible external factors of participant’s modest identity.

5.2 INTERVIEWS

PARTICIPANTS CHARACTERISTICS

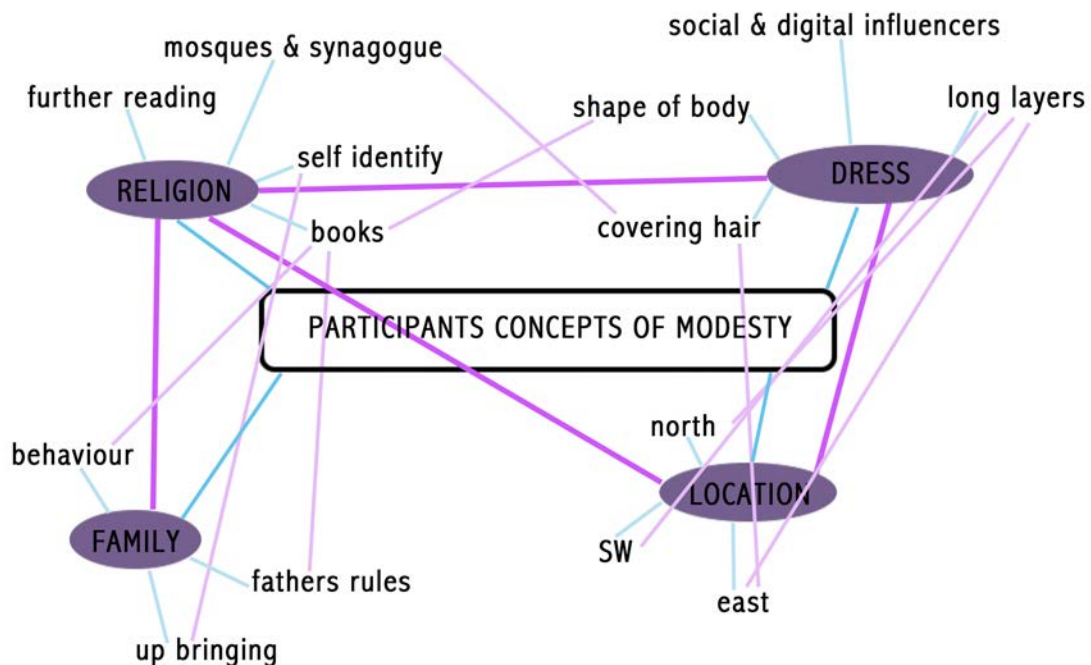
- ❖ All were in full time employment
- ❖ Grew up in London
- ❖ Self identified as religious
- ❖ Three women wore head coverings

- ❖ Two participants had children
- ❖ All were liberal
- ❖ All were educated, self-aware women

5.3 FINDINGS

The following interview data was analysed using content analysis methods, as they were narrative based interviews. Content analysis allowed for interviews to be coded alongside observational research, which allowed for all encompassing findings.

The coding frame used in content analysis requires defining one core-overarching topic, which splits into two or more sub topics, which is what was done with the data gathered through the interviews. The main topic was participant's concept of modesty, which was then broken down into various smaller topics, which were picked up on throughout the interview process, through observational methods or through the participants.



This mind-map explores the four main subtopics and how they split into various other topics. This graph provides easy visualisation of topics and how they interlink with each other.

	Had a religious identity	Agreed with modest dress as a term	Wore layers and loose clothing	Wore hair covering	Liked digital modest influencers	Had external reasons to dress modestly	Idea of modest dress linked to not showing much skin – nudity	Purchases clothing from high street
HW1	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
NH1	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
NH2	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
HW2	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
PJW	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
YJW	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

This graph shows the correlation between participants and the topics found through the coding frame. Each colour represents a different participant

Findings have been identified through the topics that came up during content analysis coding:

- ❖ Religious identity
- ❖ Visual identity of faith
- ❖ Interpretation of the concepts of modesty and modest dress
- ❖ What they wear, what is their personal style?
- ❖ The high street
- ❖ Digital visibility of modest dressers

Interviews were transcribed from recorded conversations, which made defining topics clearer. Themes were established through multiple readings of the interviews; and by using coding methods discussed in the methodology

The participants were all from London, as this was the centre of research for this study. This meant straightforward access to groups, charities and participants. One core organisation that provided support for this study was Moshie House in Willesden Green. Moshie House hosts Shabbat dinners, which the researcher attended to gain further knowledge on Judaic rituals, culture and clothing. Phrases such as ‘Black Hat’ kept being mentioned, this referred to Haredi orthodox Jewish areas, where most pious men wear black hats; “Stamford Hill is very black hat”.

The word ‘frum’ was also repeatedly mentioned whilst talking about clothing; it refers to the more devout dress and actions of some Jewish people, usually longer and looser outfits will be described as frum; “this outfit is very frum”. At

one of these Shabbat dinners one Jewish woman spoke about her experiences with clothing within the orthodox community. After living in a strict Haredi household in Stamford Hill for her whole life she realised that she didn't want to continue to live as a Haredi woman and left both her family and the community. Speaking to her about clothing, modesty and the current trends was highly informative. She described how she bought a denim skirt and kept it hidden, never wore it but just looked at it, which demonstrates the power of clothing and the links to 'freedom' that this minor rebellion represented.

She first explained that the dress differs among different groups; "it depends on which sect you come from, some women cover their hair with a wig, some cover double, so they have a wig and a hat, some just have a tichel". She gave an introduction to the theme of long skirts, which continued to be a topic throughout this study; "four inches below the knee, and thick tights". She commented on the apparent homogeneity of the group "from the outside the clothing all looks the same, but if you're living in the community (you notice the differences) there are different skirts, you have pleated, non-pleated, small pleats, big pleats". This explains the subtle differences and nuances in Jewish clothing that I had noticed whilst conducting field research.

She concluded by saying: "because of all the rules, there isn't a huge selection of clothing" which was an interesting point that I decided to speak to participants about; whether they felt limited by their modest dress.

This conversation proved to be an invaluable source of knowledge and information; it introduced me first-hand to the experiences of orthodox women and their clothing. It brought up themes that the researcher could discuss with other participants, such as the length of clothing, hair covering and limitations.

Geographically all of the participants' locations fitted with the ONS census religious data. The Jewish women that were interviewed lived in Jewish areas within London such as the NW and some of the Muslim women that were interviewed came from either SW London or East London.

5.4.1 RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

In order to explore their modest dress, the religious identity of participants needs to be considered. One of the key points within the semi-structured interviews was that participants had to self-analyse their religious identity and all participants identified as either Muslim or Jewish, with most calling themselves modern, reform or liberal. In order to understand to second objective in this study it was prudent to understand the religious identity of participants in order to see how much this affected their clothing choices. How religious participants defined themselves corresponded directly with how modest they were and how modest they dressed.

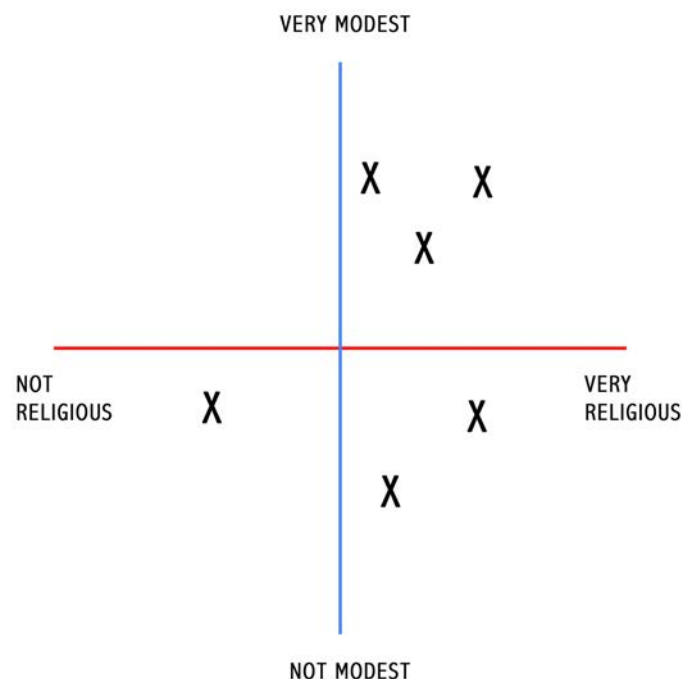
The relationship between modesty and religion became apparent when one non-hijabi Muslim (*Appendix 5, NH1*) woman described the link for her between religion and modesty as; “modesty is a big part of my faith”. A Jewish participant (*Appendix 6, PJW*) said that: “I always identified as a secular Jew, so Jewish identity was always important to me.” She then discussed her religious journey, saying: “I enjoy the community and lots of aspects of religious practice that I never thought I would when I was younger.”

A non-hijabi wearing participant (*Appendix 5, NH1*) commented: “I find ‘religious’ a very difficult term because sometimes the term ‘religious’ itself is related to how a person dresses, how a person looks.” She found religiousness tough to define. But she did go on to define her religious beliefs and the rituals that define her religion. “I am a Muslim, and I would do my five daily prayers, I would eat halal, not drink (alcohol) and not eat pork,” she said.

A younger Jewish participant (*appendix 9, YJW*) also identified herself by the laws of her religion, saying: “We’ve always kept kosher...” She explained her Jewish upbringing: “We’re traditional, but we’re not particularly religious, I grew up with a strong Jewish influence...” Religious identity was very important to one Muslim participant (*appendix 7, HW2*), who said: “I was raised a Muslim. It’s definitely an important part of my identity.”

5.4.2 QUESTION CONCLUSION

This question was vital so as to find out just how 'religious' the participants considered themselves, though as one participant pointed out religiousness is a hard term to define. In order to be a participant for this study participants had to self identify as being religious, which meant that they relate or believe in a specific religion. Participants did consider themselves to be religious, though some were more religious than others. The obvious finding for this question was that peoples upbringing led to their religious beliefs and identity. Finding out how religious each participant allowed for parallels to be made between the religiousness of the participant and how modest their clothing was; discussing participants allowed for correlations to be made, so as to see how much their religiousness effect their modesty. *Wang (2014)* at refinery29.com wrote about the uniqueness of each religions modest dress; "Each creed or sect has its own strict clothing guidelines that pertain to fabric, colours, length, and cut."



5.5.1 VISUAL IDENTITY OF FAITH

Hair covering is the most visible form of modest dress, and although not all participants practiced it, the ones that did had strong links to their religious identity through wearing it. It was integral to this study to investigate hair covering as it is a key component of modest dress. Communicating with a variety of different women about their views is vital, as *Seigelshifer and Hartman (2011)* detail:

“Still, multicultural feminists claim that in order to understand a cultural practice and its impact on women's lives, we should listen to the women themselves in order to learn how they negotiate the cultural practices that regulate their lives and through which they define themselves.”

Seigelshifer and Hartman (2011)

Participants that covered their hair each had a unique way of doing so, and all that did cover their hair used it as a form of identity. **HW2** said that her hijab being a visual representation of her faith and the impact it has on her identity, saying: “It becomes a big part of your identity, it’s an important part of spiritual identity and your visible identity.” She concluded that “religion can’t be forced upon someone”.

“When I first put it on it was more spiritual, I think it means something different every day, sometimes it becomes a mark of your identity, sometimes it’s deeply spiritual, sometimes it can be political” **HW2** *discussing her hijab.*

This statement shows the participant’s understanding of the political ramifications of wearing the hijab within the current political climate; “because

they want to be visibly identifiable as 'Muslim', and for them a form of veiling is central to that identity" *Eltahawy (2015)*.

A non-hijabi participant (**NH1**) described how she would cover certain parts of her body, even though she doesn't wear a hijab; the notion of modesty in terms of Islamic identity doesn't have to mean wearing a hijab, it is something that can be translated through the wearing of loose clothing and long layers.

"Despite not wearing a headscarf I wouldn't show my legs, for example. I would not wear low cut clothing, I will not show my cleavage, I will not be wearing any tight-fitting clothing..." **NH1**

The Jewish participants also discussed covering hair, the younger participant described her mother's synagogue wear: "My mum will wear a hat to show that she's married and to show that she is respecting God by covering her head" (**YJW**). This participant explained one of the reasons Jewish women cover their hair is: "a symbol of your relationship status" as hair covering is only practised by married women, sometimes only in synagogues.

"Within a community, distinctions among group members can identify other categories in addition to ethnicity, such as age, marital status, and religious or political affiliation" *Eicher (2014)*

The married Jewish participant described her choice of hair covering (*appendix 8, PJW*); "...I do it my own way, so I wear lots of colourful headscarfs, rather than a boring hat..." **PJW** is clearly aware of trends and what she likes within the fashion of modest dress, and what she finds dull. She will only cover her hair in certain circumstances; "I'll cover my hair if I'm going to synagogue, or somewhere else really Jewish, where it is kind of expected..."

“With hair covering the general idea is to cover your hair before God. As soon as you’re married you are supposed to save your hair for your husband...”

PJW

Describing the different cultural head coverings in each Jewish neighbourhood solidified the Jewish theory of minhag hamakom, wherein people dress like their neighbours to fit in; “people who wear wigs are in a religious community where they all wear wigs...” (**PJW**) The differences between the more liberal modest dress of Willesden Green and the far more Haredi dress of Stamford Hill were discussed; which highlighted the dissimilarities between two sects of Judaism. *Entwistle (2015)* examines how fashions are influenced by the environment people are in; “fashion, then, is a particular system of dress found under particular social circumstances.” Wearing similar clothing to people locally allowed participants to reflect their religious identity to members of the same ingroup; *Crane (2000)* writes: “Clothing revealed not only social class and gender but frequently occupation, religious affiliation, and regional origin, as well.”

PJW’s description of the different clothing trends within specific neighbourhoods emphasises the diverse conventions within modest dress. “No-one in my community has ever come up to me and asked why I don’t cover up, and also no one has ever taught me the text or the reasons why we do it, because it is not that kind of community”, the type of modest dress a person wears connotes fealty to a local neighbourhood or area, it is a form of group activity that offers a sense of belonging.

Covering hair with either a shietal or a tichel can connote a person’s religiousness and piety; “someone who wears a scarf all the time, and someone who wears a wig all the time are probably equally religious” (**PJW**).

“I wouldn’t wear a wig, it would be weird, but the scarf is my way of making head covering fun, a way of self

expression... I like to combine different coloured scarfs to match my outfits." *PJW*

This participant prefers to wear scarfs rather than wigs as it allows her more self-expression and a wider variety of options. The younger Jewish woman pointed out the style preferences and codes of sheitels, saying: "The sheitels look very realistic, they do it so they know that they are being respecting to God and respecting their husband, but then they have the hat on top which is for everyone else." Not only are their sub-trends within shietals, but also women are sensitive of the style and colour of them, choosing from a variety of different wig options.

"...although the decision to adopt *hijab* is shaped by beliefs about Qur'anic injunction, Muslim women also reflect on its symbolic significance and how it features in the public performance of identity." *Hopkins & Greenwood (2013)*

5.5.2 QUESTION CONCLUSIONS

This chapter answers key points within the aim of this study; what informs women's choice to wear modest clothing and how they express their personal identity through the clothing that they wear.

The researcher learnt that even though not all participants wore head coverings, they still covered certain body parts eg breasts and arms. They wore loose long clothing as that was what they had interpreted through religious texts was modest. Learning about how each participant showed their personal style and identity through modest clothing along side the observations made identifying common trends clearer. The common trends were that; participants covered according to the spiritual importance of a place or person, the ones that covered their hair did so due to interpretation of religious texts or leaders and that some participants felt that there was a strong link between modesty and colour choices in clothing. The trends found through interviews linked with

the observational findings: practicing Jewish women wore long skirts and wigs or headscarfs. Practising Muslim women wore bright headscarfs to contrast their predominantly dark clothing; they also wore long layers to find their body shape.

5.6.1 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONCEPTS OF MODESTY AND MODEST DRESS

In order to understand why participants chose to wear modest clothing, their interpretations to modesty had to be investigated. As all participants deemed themselves to be religious, the interpretations of religious concepts of modest were spoken about. Most participants had interpreted their concepts of modesty through religious texts but some had also gotten their interpretations from leaders and family. It was important to understand the background of participants modesty interpretations, as this linked directly to their clothing choices in some cases. Each participant interpreted modesty and modest dress differently; they described personal experiences that have influenced their opinions on modest dress. A general consensus of a definition of modest dress was reached amongst a majority of participants, which was that modest dress was loose fitting and did not show various parts of the body (cleavage, legs or arms).

The younger Jewish participant described modest dress as; “not looking like a slut, it’s how I want my grandparents to see me”, she also linked modesty to respect; “I try to dress more modestly around them because I respect them (grandparents) and I want them to see me in a modest way” (*YJW*). She concluded that modest clothing to her meant; “covering up and not exposing to much” and that if she were attending a religious event she would; “...cover according to Jewish law, covering my shoulders, covering my knees and my chest area”.

“Not dressing sexually, provocatively and covering up...what modesty is would be covering up, and what it

isn't would be wearing provocative clothing, showing cleavage/boobs, and short skirts or showing your belly wouldn't be modest" **PJW**.

"It would be not wearing something too tight, or too revealing of your body, it would also be not necessarily showing your legs, and also trying to wear long sleeves or maybe not showing too much of your arm, trying not to show much skin." **NH1** *shared a similar opinion*.

NH2 (appendix 6) mentioned the expectations she has within her family to dress modestly; "there is still an expectation on how I should dress, so I wouldn't wear short sleeves I don't wear really tight clothes. My family don't wear hijabs, but we are still expected to wear loosely fitting clothes, and to not wear revealing clothes." These definitions of participants' ideas of modest dress echo the Chapter 1.6 on modesty's links to nudity and sexuality, which *Ellis (1899)* explored and *Barnard* also discussed.

A hijabi participant (**HW1**) linked modesty to covering; "...modesty is covering, by covering I don't mean head covering, I just mean, decent clothing". One of the non-hijabi women described her idea of modest dress; "from my own perspective, I think it's more what you're comfortable in and that it's not provocative" (**NH2**). She went on to talk about covering certain body parts, saying: "you want people to talk to you not talk to your legs, or your cleavage or your arms, you want them to talk to you as an equal." Another Muslim participant (**HW1**) echoed this: "for me modesty is more about being comfortable in your own skin and letting your personality shine through, and letting that speak for you..." A Jewish participant (**PJW**) described her sense of discomfort at wearing 'immodest' clothing; "I am not comfortable dressing in an immodest way, but it's more to do with comfort," she said.

"Modesty is not a restriction, I would rather wear something convenient" "I don't think of modesty as a defining factor, and I don't feel restricted by it in the way

that people who are more traditionally religious maybe would” **PJW**.

A liberal Jewish participant (**PJW**) discussed some of the issues to do with modest dress, saying: “I do think it’s a problematic concept in terms of people telling women what to wear”. A female rabbi (appendix 10) explained the complicated relationship between modest dress in Judaism from a feminist perspective; “a liberal Jewish critique — which I as a feminist rabbi would also hold — is that the over-concern with female modesty over male modesty shows in Jewish tradition arguably too much concern with sexual agency, sexual desire... it often focuses on desire toward women and why they should therefore dress modestly rather vice versa”. *Hahner and Varda (2012)* debated the focus on modesty towards women, stating: “modesty is a movement predominantly comprised of girls and young women who identify as members of Judaic, Christian, and Islamic faith traditions...” The male gaze on female modesty is an interesting point that one of the hijab-wearing participants mentioned. Her interpretation for wearing certain clothes was: “to not allow temptation for the man”.

Participants described modesty as a form of behaviour within their religion. “There is this thing within Islamic spirituality where the state of your soul is dependent on your actions and who you are as a person at the end of the day it’s your actions that outweigh that more than anything, rather than how you did or didn’t look,” said (**NH1**). This non-hijabi wearing woman commented that: “modesty is one of those things that can be expressed in many different ways, depending on what faith you are...”

One participant disagreed with the term “modest dress”. She said: “For me I don’t believe modesty is necessarily to do with the medium of clothing, that’s one means of representing yourself, through clothing but I don’t think modesty is something that comes from clothing” (**NH1**).

One participant did not think the word “modest” was the most appropriate word, saying: “a lot of people would be turned off by the word ‘modest’ that

could suggest that anyone who isn't dressed the way you are is immodest, which relates to the idea of veiling as a suggestive power. So I don't like the term" (**NH2**). The same Muslim participant said: "a lot of people use the term 'modest clothing' to describe religious clothing and that puts off people. I think maybe it could just be called 'clothing', not put a label on it." She went on to comment on the current trend of high-street clothing stores creating 'modest lines' purely to sell clothes. "You've got all these people like H&M cashing in on modest clothing." The same participant said that the phrase 'modest clothing' could isolate people; "I don't think it unifies people, I think it alienates people."

She concluded that modesty and specifically modest dress is subjective to each person, it's how they interpret their own ideas of modest dress; "long cardigans, long tops... they don't have the label of modest clothing so it's up to the person how they are putting different pieces of clothing together to make their outfit." Each individual has their own personal understanding of modesty. Another Muslim participant (**NH1**) commented that: "it can differ to other people, but ultimately it's about your actions..."

5.6.2 QUESTION CONCLUSIONS

Whilst clothing is what this study focuses on, it is important to understand what is meant by modesty as a whole. Participants detailed the importance's of acting modestly, which meant treating people with respect and being polite, most participants detailed the importance of acting modestly over dressing modestly, this was a large part of how participants interpreted modesty.

Most participants said that the word modesty made them think of clothing, with some disagreeing with the term completely. The concept of modesty was subjective to each participant, they all interpreted differently through their clothing and behaviour. Even though each participant described their own unique concept of modest clothing they all shared similar codes; covering, long layers and dark colours. Some participants interpreted modesty in the

most simple way – to cover ones body, while others interpreted it in a more holistic way – being unrestrictive and allowing the wearer to focus on their personality, self-respect and actions.

This question made it clear that the concept of modesty was extraordinarily broad and multi-faceted and most importantly did not focus entirely on clothing, but dictated an entire form of behaviour to some. It answered one of the key parts of the aims of this study, which was to understand a woman's interpretation of modesty and how they show that through clothing.

5.7.1 WHAT THEY WEAR, WHAT IS THEIR PERSONAL STYLE?

“Style can be thought of as an internal attribute,
something that defines our sense of who we are...”

Design Museum (2017)

Style is intrinsic to the study of dress, and specifically the study of modest dress, where there are an infinite number of styles and nuances within the ideas of modest dress. Each item of clothing has its own style, as shown by the wearer, though not all styles are considered to be in fashion. *Barnard (pg 10, 2013)* commented on the differences between style and fashion: “...while every item of dress will be in a particular style, not every style will be the fashion, as styles go in and out of fashion.”

This question allowed participants to detail how they interpreted modesty through their clothing. This question again linked to the observations, as the clothing participants wore was similar to that observed on the streets. There was a surprising amount of variety in what the participants wore: jeans, long tops, dress and skirts were all worn. The data collected from participants showed what style of modest dress they wore, as well as what was considered to be in fashion within the modest clothing world.

“I usually do wear long sleeved things, I always think if I wasn't a Muslim would I still wear long

sleeves, and I think, yes I would it's just more for personal style and personal preference." (HW2)

Layers are *de rigueur* in modest dress, as they help to conceal parts of the body deemed 'immodest', layers help to create a flat and straight silhouette that some women desire. The popularity of layering reflected the observational findings, as it was the common trend in every location. Participants mentioned wearing something longer under or over short clothing, so as to make the outfit modest; "if I were to wear a t-shirt I might wear a jumper on to or a top underneath..." (HW2). Another Muslim participant explained how she layers her hijab with the rest of her outfit, she made sure the scarf goes below her chest and that she wears a coat or summer jacket; "so that if there is a breeze and my clothes move, nothing is revealed."

Barnard (pg 53, 2013) comments: "the argument for modesty revolves around the idea that certain body parts are indecent or shameful and should be covered so that they cannot be seen", this thinking is reflected in the participants choosing to wear long layers. A non-hijab wearing participant mentioned the negatives of wearing layers; "in the summer I always feel like I stand out from the crowd because I'm wearing a cardigan during summer..." (NH1). Wearing layers has meant that she stands out from the crowd but; "I've done my best to assimilate, especially to weather..." so concluded that; "layering is your friend." Layering clothing over other clothing is a simple technique that one woman used to go to the mosque; "if we do go to the mosque, I can get away with wearing western clothes but it would be long, for example like a long dress and then have jeans on underneath, and then a cardigan."

"...Style for me is more stable than dress- it reflects an awareness and confidence of who we are" *King (2017)*

Participants described their personal style and key wardrobe items that they wear daily. A majority of participants wear trousers or long skirts with one of

the Muslim women describing her go to outfit as; “jeans and a top or a jumper” (**HW2**). Another participant that expressed this laissez faire attitude was the younger Jewish woman who detailed her daily outfits as “tights and a skirt or jeans and a top or jumper”. She elaborated that as long as it’s something I feel comfortable in, I’m not bothered by clothes that might be exposing too much...” (**YJW**) She is a fashion-conscious follower of trends; “I like to think that what I do wear doesn’t stick out from what the norm is.”

This idea of personal style completely contrasts with the style of a non-hijabi (**NH1**) who has a more unique outlook on dress; “I like things that are different and have a story.” She describes her sense of style as; “...eclectic...slightly more boho, I relate more to the idea of wearing tunics over jeans, I love jeans a lot.” Her choice to wear trousers instead of short skirts is a personal preference that makes her feel comfortable; “so for me I feel really comfortable wearing trousers or jeans and wearing either a really short dress as a top...”

Loose clothing is again a predominant subject within modest dress. One of the hijabi women detailed her dress as: “loose trousers with a long top below thighs with a layer on to, sometimes a cardigan” (**HW1**). The older Jewish (**PJW**) woman echoed the need to wear less revealing clothing; “for work probably a long skirt or black trousers and shirts, usually not terribly tight fitting because I am a teacher.” But for Shabbat, “I’ll wear long maxi skirts, I’ll wear them on Fridays, as Shabbat comes in it’s easier so I don’t have to get changed.” She wears skirts for Shabbat because “... the skirt is more traditional”. She believes that more women Jewish women wear skirts rather than trousers because “it says in Leviticus that a woman should not dress as a man and vice-versa, and I believe that is why some women won’t wear trousers...” she concludes by mentioning that “I don’t feel like I have to hide my body, so I wear a mixture of skirts and trousers.”

Motivations for modesty go beyond religion as participants’ careers also influence their dress, just as the **YJW** woman commented that: “I wouldn’t wear something too revealing because of my office job”. **NH2** described her

work outfit as a form of power dressing, as she worked in a courtroom. The focus on her clothing at work she described as an example of the sometimes sexist and male dominated workspace that a courtroom can be.

“If I am power dressed, someone will get up and ask ‘how can I help you?’”

“It would have to be a full-on suit, blazer, trousers, crisp shirt, minimal jewellery, hair tied back, natural-looking make up, some bold lipstick. I have a full face of make up on when I go to court, that helps a lot...”

5.7.2 QUESTION CONCLUSION

Participant’s identity as women effected what they wore, as some participants felt that they shouldn’t show certain body parts or shapes, it also effected what they wore at work. Common trends appeared, one of which was the popularity of long sleeved tops, which were common amongst both Jewish and Muslim participants as they could be layered with any other clothing. Asking participants to describe their style and day-to-day clothing made it clear that there were external factors in participants clothing choices, such as jobs, family and personal taste.

A definite that was discovered through this question was that religion/religiosity did have a link to style. Participants had interpreted their religious concepts of modesty in such a way that it had a definitive link to what they chose to wear.

5.8.1 THE HIGH STREET

This question related directly to the above question, participants would often talk about their style in conjunction with what shops they went to for clothing.

It was important to understand where they purchased their clothing from so as to see if there were any 'mainstream' high street brands that catered for modest dressers.

The most common retailers that participants purchased their clothing from were mostly all high street stores and were affordable mainstream fashion shops, such as Topshop and H&M. The high street offered participants a wide variety of styles and price points, with one Muslim (**NH2**) woman listing the shops she likes: "but yes I do shop a majority on the high street, Dorothy Perkins, New Look, Zara. Dorothy Perkins because they have a tall range, which is affordable. I only discovered ASOS recently". A couple of participants also mentioned online retailers; "I buy clothes from eBay," said (**NH1**). The younger Jewish woman said that she shops "at standard high-street shops as well as online shops like ASOS." Another participant mentioned that "I never used to like ASOS but I really appreciate the fact that you can return things for free" (**HW2**).

One of the Jewish participants said she buys clothing from Boohoo and Amazon. "I buy most of my clothes from Amazon, particularly maxi skirts that I like. I used to buy maxi skirts from Boohoo" (**PJW**). Budget shops were also popular, with one Muslim woman explaining: "I really like H&M a lot and also Primark and lately, if it's in my budget, Zara" (**NH1**). Another woman said: "sometimes from Primark I get something that is long" (**HW1**). The younger Jewish woman did mention the lack of variety and choice in the high street for more modest clothing, saying: "a lot of the longer clothing isn't the most flattering or well fitted, it's all very plain and basic".

A couple of participants voiced their preference for more independent retailers, with one woman buying clothes abroad. "Most of my clothing is from Pakistan, then I can choose the print, the material, shape, it just suits me," said (**HW1**). One participant said she looked for ethical clothing. "I shop in a variety of stores. I am trying to shop ethically, it's really difficult," said (**NH2**). The same participant is a vegan, which affects her clothing choices. "I have been looking into vegan brands, I don't wear leather," she said. "I don't wear

things made from goose feathers or things made from wool; I'm transitioning to being vegan, so it affects a lot of my choices in clothes. Vegan brands are usually based in the US.”

5.8.2 QUESTION CONCLUSIONS

So as to understand key modesty trends (the overall aim and one objective) participants were asked where they shopped and what they looked for in the high street. It was important to look at the purchasing habits of participants, so as to gauge a 360 look at the shopping and clothing trends of modest dressers. The most common trend was also the least surprising and that was online fashion was the most popular place to shop amongst participants. All participants used ASOS, which they found convenient and affordable, they also used Boohoo and Amazon Fashion to buy clothing online.

The predominant high-street shops that were mentioned were H&M, participants found that it was affordable and catered to modest dressers well; Primark and Zara were also mentioned.

The majority of the participants shopped at ‘mainstream’ high street stores but a few went to charity and vintage shops, to find that special and unique piece and to help them to shop ethically. Most of the participants that wore modest dress found it simple to find clothing that matched with their interpretations of modesty. They found long and loose clothing in high street shops, and if they sold short or low cut clothing they could easily buy clothing to layer, making the outfit modest.

5.9.1 DIGITAL VISIBILITY OF MODEST DRESSERS

Participants were asked about their knowledge and awareness of modest social media stars to find out the popularity and visibility of modest bloggers and YouTubers. *Lewis (abstract, 2015)* has previously researched the growing phenomenon of modest bloggers; “since the early 2000s modest fashion blogs and social media and related e-commerce have constituted a zone of women-led fashion mediation fostering dialogue within and across

faiths and between religious and secular practitioners”. A key part of the aim of this study was to understand women’s interpretation of modesty and what informs this. Digital influencers have had a huge effect on fashion trends; the surge in modest fashion influencers has in some cases influenced participants dress.

This question brings this study up-to-date, as bloggers and Youtubers are now such a large part of how people are influenced. Digital influencers are the social trend drivers today, inspiring people and communicating a modest style of clothing. The current digital visibility of modest dress is in part, due to the freedom of information that social media provides. The popularity of modest dress within social media has become a topic widely discussed in both the media: “Modest Fashion: A Trend Or An Evolution In Fashion?” “London Modest Fashion week: ‘Faith can be fashionable’” and in academia. *Lewis (pg 2, 2013)* comments on these modest social media personalities; “there has been an exponential increase in commentary, ranging across ‘independent’ blogs, YouTube fashion tutorials and discussion fora as well as brand websites and corporate social media”. These bloggers have been creating unique and trend-driven modest outfits as a reaction to the more traditional and sometimes unflattering modest dress worn previously; they blend popular styles with the traditions of their religions.

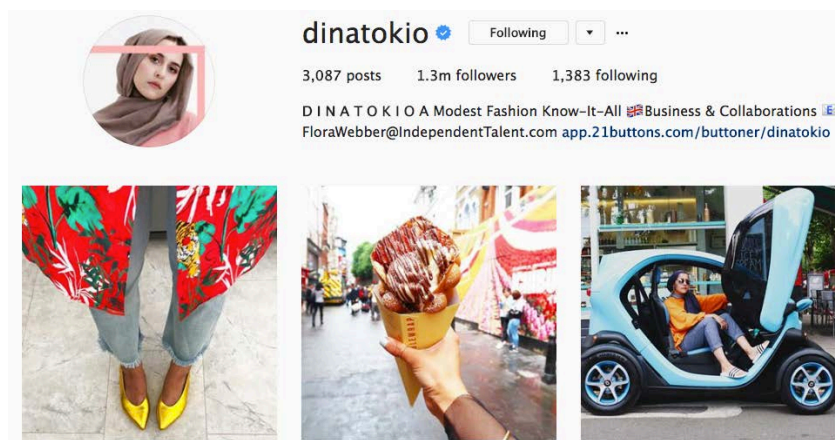
“They incorporate pieces with things. I think that lot of British Muslims want to look on trend, they want to look fashionable, but at the same time they have got to make it work in a way that makes them feel comfortable in a way that’s modest at the same time”

NH1

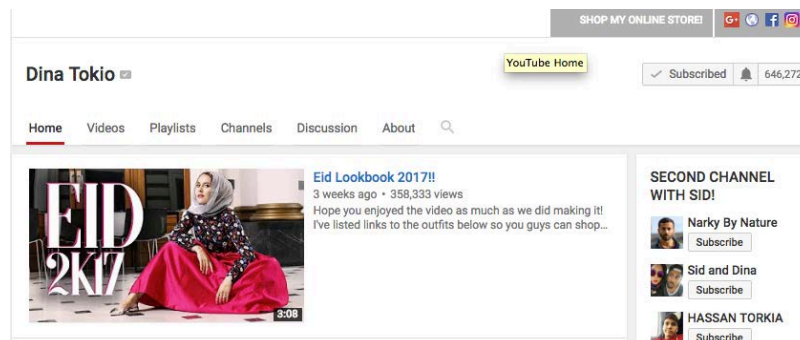
The two most mentioned modest social media personalities were the Muslim YouTuber and influencer Dina Tokio (figure 15) and the Instagram-savvy Orthodox Jewish women with their own modest clothing range Mimu Maxi. Muslim participants explained why they admired Dina Tokio, with one saying:

“here is some stuff that Dina Tokio wears that I could not possibly wear, for example she wears skirts, but she wears tight fitted skirts.”

Tokio (real name Torkia) (figure 15) has been blogging for the past seven years. She has a large social media following across numerous channels. Her YouTube channel has 621,950 subscribers and her Instagram account has 1.2m followers. Tokio, like a lot of modest bloggers, integrates her religion in with her platforms, talking about Ramadan and discussing modesty with followers.



Screenshot of Dina's Instagram page



Screenshot of Dina Tokio's Youtube

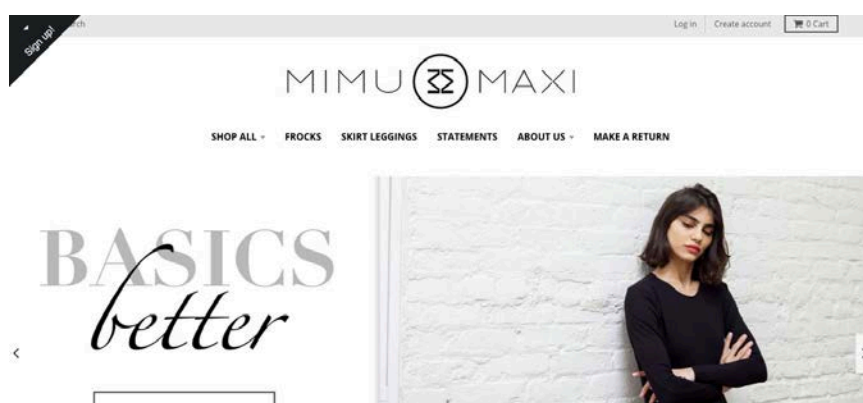
“Rather than discussing whether and how Islamic Fashion is legitimate within an Islamic tradition, they present it as more or less self-evident and, by doing so, contribute to its normalisation” *Lewis (2013)*.

A hijabi-wearing participant described why she admired Dina Tokio. “I think she’s incredible and I really appreciate what she’s doing” (HW2). When

putting yourself online in the public eye, there is bound to be some negative feedback, especially if you're seen as representing a religion. Talking about the issues facing bloggers, **NH2** said: "There is lots of controversy around them as well, which is interesting, Dina Tokio she's under a lot of controversy, and Noor who did the *Playboy* cover as well (figure 16)." **HW1** had some thoughts regarding Dina, saying: "I really like her, but at the same time I have a few reservations against her in terms of (how she dresses), you either wear a hijab or you don't, and with her sometimes showing her arms and neck and parts of her legs, it's not respectful...she makes it sound so casual, especially as she influences young girls." **NH2** disagreed. "A lot of people talk about how she's not wearing hijab so there is a lot of controversy around that, I'm not really that bothered by it, I think its great, she's representing," she said.

"It's nice to see people from your community representing on billboards or whatever, its nice, it's great. I think it is important to include all aspects of communities, regardless of there background I current mainstream campaigns" **NH2** *on the importance of bloggers and representation.*

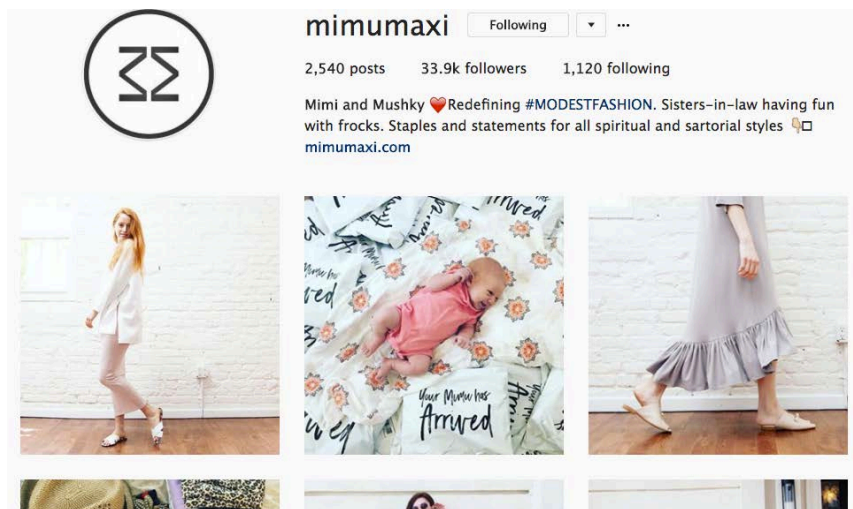
Refinery29.com describes Mimu Maxi as: "Two Hasidic women, Brooklyn designers Mimi Hecht and Mushky Notik (figure 17) of Mimu Maxi, living both a religious life and a fashionable one are pursuits that can go hand in hand" (2014). They have a large social media following where they both post their outfits of the day, newest products and collections, as well as religious Jewish messages. This large social following has prompted numerous articles to be written about them, which have clearly influence this study's participants, who came across the brand through Facebook or Instagram.



Scenshott of Mimu Maxi's Website

“It’s nice to see less frumpy clothing, and they prove that you can dress modestly whilst still being fashionable.” **YJW** describing Mimu Maxi, which she first saw on Facebook.

Mimu Maxi combines the laws of tzniut with on-trend colours, silhouettes and styles that appeal to a wide selection of multi-faith women. “Their fashion-forward personal style has led them to become more in touch with their spirituality, their community, and a larger world of women from all religious backgrounds looking for modest fashion that’s also exciting,” says (Refinery29.com). Their modest clothing range appeals to anyone who wants to dress modestly and was mentioned by a couple of Muslim participants. “I know about this modest brand in New York called Mimu Maxi, their clothes are so nice, but very expensive,” said one. Mimu Maxi have reached such a level of popularity that they have become *the* brand to mention in popular culture, when discussing modest dress, with articles on Refinery29.com, Vogue, Huffington Post and Popsugar.



Screenshot of Mimu Maxi's Instagram page

5.9.2 QUESTION CONCLUSION

Digital influencers are seen as a positive, with participants recognising and naming some of the most popular ones; “women are using the internet to

share ideas, rate styles, comment on mainstream provision and intervene in debates about modest behaviour, extending the opportunities offered offline by the establishment in print of faith-based style media in the first half of the 2000s". The wave of British bloggers and YouTubers has started to take off in the wake of the popularity of the American modest bloggersphere. These new bloggers have used the freedom of social media to discuss new styles and trends, as well as political and religious topics, which has led to; "the result: growth and visibility for the modest-fashion movement and a new generation of religious-lifestyle bloggers, designers, and trendsetters from across the faith spectrum" (*The Atlantic*, 2015).

These bloggers have such a large influence over their audience that they help to form the audience's ideas of modesty. This question answers a part of one of the objectives as it looks at the influences behind modesty and modest dressing. It brought the study up to date and made it culturally relevant as bloggers and influencers play such a large part in fashion trends and influencing audiences.

Whilst some participants discussed some influencers, it was clear that most participants were too old to be influenced by them. However influencers were seen positively (overall) as they were seen as a positive influence within modest dressing groups. There were minor disagreements when it came to how some were dressed, but that linked to participant's interpretation of modesty and modest dress. One participant felt that modest dress meant that she had cover her body more, and when it came to modest Youtubers she felt that Dina Tokio didn't dress modestly enough.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The overarching aim of this study was to understand women's interpretation of modesty, what informs this and how it affects their dress and personal identity. Focusing on Muslim and Jewish women within small concentrated areas of London will allow for an impartial and stimulating cross section study. Through ethnographic methods it was discovered that there were a variety of interpretations of modesty and modest dress. Whilst Judaism and Islam were different, they also had very similar concepts of modesty including covering and behaviour. Wang (2014) described the basic modesty codes as; "for most, that means elbows are covered; necklines stay high; long, conservative skirts are a must; and married women cover their hair" this echo's the findings of the study perfectly.

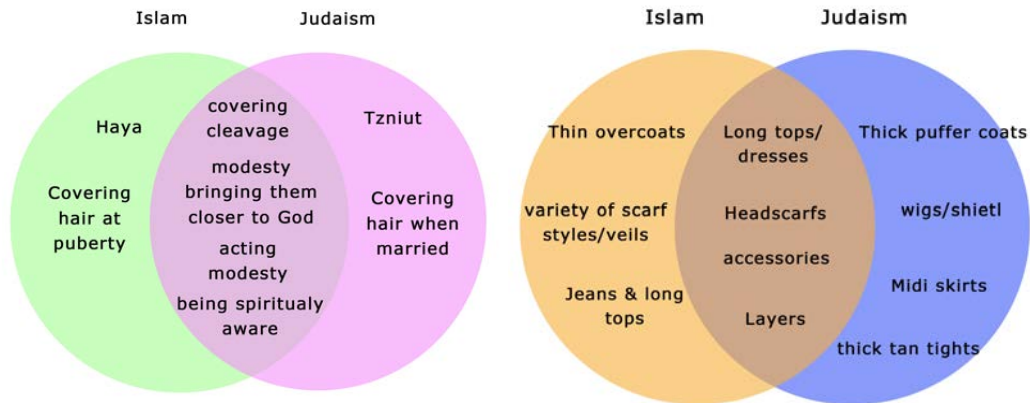
The first objective was to find out key modesty codes and whilst each observation, secondary research and participant had slightly different interpretations of modesty, they all had similarities, which included: covering, loose clothing and importantly behaviour. They had all interpreted the same text in different ways, to form their own ideas and opinions of what modesty was. There is not one simple definition of 'modesty' or even 'modest dress', as they are subjective concepts. The academic research done for this study has shown that modest dress is a visible way of showing ones allegiance to a religion, it makes people feel more pious, more connected and contented in themselves. Modest fashion is a form of non-verbal communication between ingroups and outgroups to communicate their religious identity it is an entirely subjective clothing choice.

One of the objectives was to examine the religious concepts that inform the ideas of modesty within Islam and Judaism and throughout this study it was realised that different interpretations of religious concepts are found in all Abrahamic religions. These similar codes and interpretations are visibly

shown through clothing. During the research for this study it was discovered that participants had many other outside influences for their concepts of modesty, these included jobs, family and social media stars. Finding out their was a variety of influences factors to modesty and modest dress facilitated to answer the aim of this study, as their were a lot of elements that informed their interpretation of modest dress. By ingraining themselves into the community and attending Modest focussed events the researcher discovered a broader more varied variety of modest trends and explanations of modest dress. Influences were a larger than expected topic, influences were multifaceted and included family, friends, locations, trends and social media stars.

This study explored the various different nuances within modesty and modest dressing against the interfaith backdrop of London. Modesty has become hybridised by different cultures and localised trends to form unique styles, which this study illustrates. This study set out to determine what the concept of modesty means to Jewish and Muslim women and whether they reflect it through their clothing. Using secondary academic research, observational first hand research and interviews provided an excellent matrix of research, which made the conclusions clear. These conclusions were that Jewish and Muslim interpretations of modesty were similar and that wearers of modest dress have chosen to wear it because of what they have interpreted through religious texts, family influence or location.

Using qualitative methods throughout this study meant that modesty was discovered as a concept that can include how a person acts and speaks, as well as how they dress. For some people modesty acts as guidelines for how they live their lives, regardless of their religion. A key point that was discovered through research was that modesty wasn't just about clothing, but also about behaviour, it was a guideline for how people conducted themselves.



Not all of this study's participants agreed on the meaning of the word 'modesty' in relation to dress, which some felt was a sometimes-loaded word. The word 'modesty' connotes feelings of judgement, calling something (eg clothing) modest one could be referring to others as immodest and inferior to those who perceive themselves as modest.

The aims and objectives for this study illustrate that Islam and Judaism were the focus of this study. As Islam is the second largest religion in London, it was more visible within London than Judaism. More Islamic modest clothing is being produced to match the ever-growing commercial demand, but there are some new modest Jewish fashion brands. These modest fashion brands are not religion specific as the 'rules' of modesty amongst Jewish and Muslim women are very similar and they share common modesty trends. For this study the researcher delved into to a community that outsiders might consider secular and homogenous, when in reality the Jewish community of London is relatively diverse and contains lots of interesting and unique perspectives on modest dress. Being able to identify the unique codes within the modest dress of Muslim and Jewish women allows for greater understanding of a growing consumer market.

This study explored various elements of modesty and modest dressing within the interfaith and diverse city of London. The key themes and codes of modest clothing that were discovered in this study include covering and hiding in both Judaism and Islam. Whilst some participants covered certain areas of

the body (legs, arms, cleavage and hair), others didn't, which solidifies the thinking that each person interprets the religious perceptions of modesty differently. Both Islam and Judaism share ideas of modesty, namely to cover certain body parts and hair, though women might cover them at different times in their lives. One of the main aims was to discover what predominate trends were amongst the modest dressers were, and after extensive secondary, observational and interviews it was found that it was that modest dressing women wore longer hemlines and higher necklines.

The increased acceptance and visibility of modest dress has led it to become a fashion trend amongst religious and non-religious women alike. The current trend and visibility of 'modest' dress isn't just about religious clothing, it acts as a reminder for some religious women to act in a modest way.

Modesty is a personal form of self identity and was identified as such by participants, *Cunningham (2015)* "It's about looking in the mirror and being satisfied with what's looking back at you; practising proper etiquette and kindness to those around you, and respecting the religious beliefs and faith to which you adhere."

6.2 FURTHER READING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main limitation within this study was time; with more time a wider variety of people could have been interviewed. As the researcher was a member of an outgroup it was difficult to gain entry into some groups, it would have been interesting to speak to more conservative religious people.

With more time available, this study and investigation could be extended out to further study a wider variety of groups. Embedding within the culture and religion took time, as the researcher had to gain the participants' trust before discussing this very personal subject, which meant that the researcher spoke to a small number of participants.

It would be fascinating in the future to discover and explore all the nuances of different ethnicities and religions across the UK modest dress. Then really detailed comparisons and maps could be created.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ababya	A loose cloak worn by some Muslim women that covers the entire body.
Chador	A typically Iranian style of Islamic veiling that covers both the head and upper body/chest.
Frum	A Yiddish word meaning pious or devout.
Hadith	'Accounts' or 'reports' on the Prophet Muhammad.
Haredi	A group within Orthodox Judaism, which denounces modern secular culture.
Haya	Islamic word for modesty.
Hijab	An Islamic headscarf or veil worn by some Muslim women that only covers the head.
Jilbaab	A loose cloak worn by some Muslim women that covers the entire body, including the head.
Minhag Hamakom	Minhag means <i>Jewish Law</i> . Minhag Hamakom refers to the local customs in the area, these differ from place to place.
Mosque	Islamic place of worship.
MuslimGirl.com	Created in 2009 by high school student Amani Alkhat, Muslimgirl.com provides a safe space for young Muslim women to talk about politics, style and literature amongst other things. They recently collaborated with Getty Images to produce pictures of Muslim women doing ordinary things.
Niqab	An Islamic veil worn by some Muslim women it covers the head and most of the face, showing only the eyes.

Qu'ran	The Islamic holy book that Muslims believe to be a revelation from Allah.
Sabbath/Shabbat	A day of religious observance held by some observant Jews starting from Friday evening to Saturday evening.
Shalwar kameez	A traditional Indian outfit. Shalwar refers to the trousers and kameez refers to the shirt.
Sheitel	A Yiddish word that refers to a wig or partial wig worn by orthodox married women.
Synagogue	Jewish place of worship.
Talmud	The Jewish source of law, it is made up of two books.
Tichel	A Yiddish word for a Jewish headscarf worn by married women.
Torah	The Jewish holy book, it is the first part of the Jewish bible. The Torah is the Old Testament in the Bible.

FIGURES

Figure 1



London Modest Fashion Week Promotional Poster

Figure 2



Mipsterz Facebook screenshot

Figure 3



Malek Alloula images from The Colonial Harem

Figure 4



Marjane Satrapi page 3 of Persepolis

Figure 5



L-R Sheitel and tichel



Figure 6



Shabbat dinner with Moshie House

Figure 9



Dina Torkia display picture on her blog

Figure 10



An instagram of Noor's Playboy spread

Figure 11



Mimi Hecht and Mushky Notik

Appendix 1 Proposal

EXPLORING WOMEN'S IDENTITY THROUGH MODEST DRESS WITHIN LONDON COMMUNITIES

INITIAL CONCEPT

This study aims to explore communities within London through their clothing. It will celebrate multiculturalism within post-modern cities, and how people keep traditional clothing alive within ever evolving cities. This study will promote conversation and discussion amongst people within traditional ethnic communities and those who are not part of the community. My BA Degree dissertation "How women in London express their multi-ethnic identity through contemporary clothing", examined the relationships between millennial multi-ethnic women and their clothing. This dissertation briefly went into some detail about ethnicity within London, as well as conducting qualitative and quantitative with millennials who came from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. I detailed and examined multi-ethnic women's clothing and how it was a form of expression to show their individual identity. This study was concise and spoke about multi-ethnic millennials within a postmodern city (London), who were products of an integrated post-modern city. Modest dress was not an element discussed within this study, despite it being a large part of ethnic clothing, as many other topics were discussed.

There is a gap in the pre-existing research as modest dress is a quickly evolving topic that has a huge social media presence that needs to be explored further. This thesis will explore traditional elements and influences as well as the effects cultural hybridisation and modern technology have on modest and traditional dress. Millennials are an integral group to look at, as the most multi-ethnic generation; *Howe, N. & Strauss, W* comment; "they are more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse".

Modest clothing refers to "*not revealing or emphasizing a person's figure: 'modest dress means that hemlines must be below the knee' but the codes differ from religion and ethnicities.*" Initial research and reading suggests that there appears to be significant consensus amongst religions and ethnicities as to what 'modest clothing' consists of. My view on women's modest dress is clothing that does extenuate the figure, hides collarbones, elbows and knees as well as covering the hair. A variety of ethnicity's and religions share similar clothing codes, secular fashion is still engrained into traditional communities as well as religious run countries. The initial investigation will be on defining *modest clothing* from the perspectives of different ethnicities and religious, whilst also looking at the historical context.

METHODOLOGY

So as to define modest clothing in the context of ethnicity and religion I will use both quantitative and qualitative methods. One primary research method that I could develop further, will be gathering information through my Final Year Major Project website: HYBRID which aimed to connect people from different ethnicities in London to communicate and discuss their clothing and the influences behind their dress. Members of the public would upload images of their outfits along with a description of their style, or what their personal influences were.

By receiving the possible funding to make the website live, I will be able to gather vital information on a variety of different people from different backgrounds, easily without having to directly interview them. Using the website to gather information, would give participants the freedom to provide as much or as little information as they want, it would give them a neutral and safe place to share their personal stories and clothing images. To promote people to use this website I would personally talk to community leaders to promote the site as well as 'advertising' on social media.

The basis of research that will be conducted throughout this thesis will be both qualitative and quantitative, so as to gather the widest amount of information from different sources (direct and non-direct). Investigating ethnography and anthropology of multi-ethnic women within London will mean that a majority of the study will be conducted through in depth semi-structured interviews with people who wear modest dress.

As modest dress has become increasingly popular with millenials a large segment of research will be undertaken in terms of bloggers and vloggers. The 'Internet Generation' aims to stand out and be heard, they create fashion blogs and YouTube channels to communicate with the world. Examples of popular modest dressers in the public eye are Hijabi Blogger and vlogger Dina Tokio has over 193,000 subscribers on YouTube where she has scarf/turban, fashion and make up tutorials, and Amani Alkhat, founder of MuslimGirl.com who aims to normalise Muslims and make Muslim woman's voices heard. Modest dress has trickled in mainstream and high-street fashion most recently with the help of Muslim fashion designer Hana Tajima who recently created a LifeWear Collection for Uniqlo, which combines on trend clothing whilst also keeping the collection modest. In a similar vein Hasidic women, Brooklyn based clothing designers Mimi Hecht and Mushky Notik of Mimu Maxi are Hasidic Jewish women designing *fashionable* modest clothing for everyone. By interviewing and researching influential bloggers and vloggers I will gain a wider perspective on what it means to wear modest dress, whilst keeping 'on trend' in the public eye.

To contrast this there will be some academic and professional research in the form of interviews, with community leaders, who will in turn will introduce me to their traditional London communities. Links to Islamic countries will mean that I can interview people for qualitative research, as well as being able to gather in-depth personal clothing research.

This thesis aims to delve into a little known and little understood topic. Looking at ethnic dress through the eyes of multi ethnic women within London will promote conversation and understanding amongst non-modest dressers and modest dressers alike.

Appendix 2 Participant letter

University of Huddersfield School of Art, Design and Architecture

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: *“Exploring modest dress amongst women within London communities”*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for taking time to read this.

What is the purpose of the project?

The research project is intended to provide the research focus for my Art and Design Research Masters Degree.

Why have I been chosen?

You are a part of a community/ modest dresser/ an academic.

Do I have to take part?

Participation on this study is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving an explanation to the researcher.

What do I have to do?

You will be invited to take part in **interview**. This should take no more than 1hr of your time.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage in the process, please address your concerns initially to the researcher if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact Annoush Kerianoff at the School, University of Huddersfield.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in any work, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be written up in 2017. If you would like a copy please contact the researcher.

What happens to the data collected?

Data will be used as the basis of my Masters degree about modest dressing women within London.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

There will **not** be payment given.

Where will the research be conducted?

At a local coffee shop or public space eg. a park.

Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?

Claire Allen - c.allen@hud.ac.uk

Name & Contact Details of Researcher:

Annoush Kerianoff – annoush24@gmail.com

07821423597

Appendix 3

Questions for participants

1. Who are you and what do you do?
2. Give me a brief history of you- where are you and your family from, where did you grow up?
3. How religious are you?
4. What is your definition of modesty?
5. In terms of clothing...
6. Why do you wear modest clothing?
7. What is your style, examples of outfits?
8. Where do you shop?
9. Is it difficult to find clothing?
10. There is a current trend/rise in popularity of modest dressing bloggers and Youtubers, is this something you are aware of?
11. What are your thoughts on it?

Appendix 4

Typed up interview of Hijab Wearing 1 (HW1)

- Pakistani parents, born and brought up in Hounslow, married has a small daughter. Muslim. Practicing but liberal.
- 26 year old

She defined modesty “personally because of my religious background and my upbringing, modesty is covering, by covering I don’t mean head covering, I just mean, decent clothing” She comments how it contrasts the sometimes “tight clothing” of England wearing tight clothing, or revealing too much of your body isn’t modest, I personally couldn’t feel modest wearing that

Describes her clothing “I like to wear relatively long tops, if it is too tight I will wear a cardigan or something on top” “I wear the headscarf, rather than a jilbaab as I feel I am not at that stage yet” Speaking of the jilbaab and the chador “I feel that if I wore that I am too representative of my religion in a certain way, I don’t want my actions to represent my religion in a certain way” she comments that someone wearing a jilbaab etc would probably be more practicing.

Discusses whether or not covering is obligatory, as Hadiths have differing opinions.

Her definition of veiling is a “face covering” mentions that in the Qur’an when a woman leaves the house there should be a long veil on top of her clothes, one extra layer “to cover, so you can give up the sexuality of your body” “to not allow temptation for the man”

The hijab was a choice for her; she comments that it’s more meaningful when you choose to wear it. “Religion can’t be forced upon someone”

Her daily outfits consist of “loose trousers” “long top below thighs with an layer on top, sometimes an open cardigan” “scarf, which from the front always goes below my chest” “coat or a summer jacket on top of clothes, so that if there is a breeze and my clothes move nothing is revealed. It makes me feel comfortable”

She buys her clothing from high street shops “sometimes from Primark I get something that is long” She buys some clothing in British high street shops, and gets it sent to Pakistan to be tailored “most of my clothing is from Pakistan, then I can choose the print, the material, shape, it just suits me” trousers she purchases are from Primark, New Look and M&S.

She discussed the rising popularity of Hijabi bloggers and Youtube, she names Dina Tokio as someone she watches. “I really like her, but at the same time I have a few reservations against her in terms of (how she dresses), you either do hijab or you don’t, and with her sometimes showing her arms and neck and parts of her legs that it’s not respectful” “she makes it sound so casual, especially as she influences young girls”

“Everyday I pray to God that she (daughter) will want to wear it” but she wouldn’t force her daughter into wearing it.

Dress “I want to be comfortable all the time, I am not into fashion”

Appendix 5

Non-hijab wearing (NH1)

- Born in Croydon south London.
- Is Pakistani Muslim.

- Did a degree in Abrahamic religions for both her BA and MA. Works at a London Charity as a Media and Comms officer.

Religious identity

I find religious a very difficult term because sometimes the term religious itself is related to how a person dresses, how a person looks. If it's the question do I believe in God, yes I do, if it's a question of do I believe in an afterlife, I do, if it is about whether I have beliefs and practices within my faith and I practice them, I do the best way that I can. I am a Muslim, and I would do my 5 daily prayers, I would eat Halal, not drink (alcohol), and not eat pork and so forth. So in terms of religious I follow a faith.

What she defines modesty as: modesty is one of those things that can be expressed in many different ways, depending on what faith you are, some people it can mean a headscarf, for some it might not mean a headscarf. For me I think modesty is more about letting your personality shine through, rather than someone looking at you for how you look, or how you dress.... Especially nowadays in our society we are so fixated on what people look like, and how people dress, we also have perceptions from the way a person looks like, and according to psychologists within the first 30secs of meeting someone, a person can get an idea about the other person.

For me modesty is more about being comfortable in your own skin and letting your own personality shine through, and letting that speak for you, rather than what you look like necessarily.

Modesty and modest behaviour

Its more about your actions and your behaviour, for me personally as a Muslim I don't wear a headscarf, I have not problems with people who do wear headscarf's. But they're have been cases, in the past amongst other Muslim women I have been discriminated against and some people might think that I don't have faith because I don't wear a headscarf.

There is this thing within Islamic spirituality where the state of your soul is dependant on your actions and who you are as a person at the end of the day its your actions that out way the more than anything rather than how you did or didn't look.

For me despite not wearing a headscarf I wouldn't show my legs for example I would not wear low cut clothing/ I will not show my cleavage, I will not be wearing any tight fitting clothing and I would always not show so much of my arms, so usually ¾ sleeves to full sleeves. So to some extent I know that

modesty is a big part of my faith, but that it can differ to other people, but ultimately it's about your actions that's the main thing that speaks. You could cover your head, you could wear incredibly loose clothing but in the day you could be a very mean person, do horrible things and not care about people and at the end of the day your actions are a big part of who you are, its what effects the state of your soul...

How would you define modest clothing?

It would be not wearing something too tight, or too revealing of your body, it would also be not necessarily showing your legs, and also trying to wear long sleeves or maybe not showing too much of your arm, trying to not show too much skin. For me personally its about trying express my fashion sense at the same time, I can have that guideline in my mind, because that's what's important to me but it doesn't mean that I cant dress or look fashionable or follow a fashion trend or not shop at high street shops.

What is your sense of style?

My fashion style would probably be eclectic ...slightly boho I relate more to the idea of wearing tunics over jeans, I love jeans a lot, and again I am a British Muslim so when it comes to fashion some people might argue that I am adopting western clothing which is a big thing that comes up. So for me I feel really comfortable wearing trousers or jeans and wearing either a really short dress as a top over something, wearing blazers and also vintage pieces and kimonos and a mixture of stuff. I like things that are different and have a story.

Layering

At the beginning it was (a bit thing), during the summer it's incredibly difficult, in the summer I always feel like I stand out from the crowd because I'm wearing a cardigan during summer, why are you wearing trousers during summer, why don't you wear a summer dress like me or wear a mini skirt, or don't you feel really hot? So for me in terms of layers, before I used to wear a long sleeved top and then a dress top on top of it and now I have learnt that I can just wear a dress top and maybe wear a cardigan with sleeves over it, so I've done my best to assimilate, especially to weather. Layering is a big part, I can wear something in autumn, I can also wear it in summer at the same time, so I don't necessarily have to adapt, so I don't have to have a 'summer wardrobe' or an 'autumn wardrobe'. Layering is your friend.

Shopping habits

I really like to buy online, mainly because I can find some really cool pieces online sometimes. I buy clothes from eBay, the independent stores, I will find something new that I like and just buy it. I don't have a lot of time to go around shops and try things on. I really like H&M a lot and also Primark and lately if it's in my budget. My brother got me this really great jacket from Zara, it's a velvet military style jacket and it was out of season, he bought it online even though it was ridiculously expensive, but I really like that jacket a lot. At the end of the day it's the textures and if I would wear something like that. I also like charity shops, I buy scarfs and accessories from charity shops.

What type of headscarf do you wear when you have to go to a religious events?

In general I would just throw it (a headscarf) on. I always like to have specifically coloured scarfs, I like headscarf's with patterns. I know on YouTube there are some hijabis with a lot of style, it's a great art behind how they do it, and the little thing they do like putting earrings as an accessory on top (of the headscarf) or broaches, its amazing, unfortunately I am not very talented in that.

Youtubers and the rising digital visibility of Muslims

For me and my own style its just me finding what I like but I am aware of some, I know that's there's Dina Tokio. She springs to mind because I remember that she was once on this New Look competition, I remember watching that show and she had to style some outfits from the runway and I like programs to do with fashion and I found it very interesting especially the colours, what type of colours people used in the outfit. There is some stuff that Dina Tokio wears that I could not possibly wear, for example she wears skirts, but she wears tight, fitted skirts. She posted an outfit of the day an even though I thought I could never wear something like that she pulled it off really well, in terms of the colours she used.

They incorporate modern pieces with things. I think that lot of British Muslims want to look on trend, they want to look fashionable, but at the same time they have got to make it work in a way that makes them feel comfortable in a way that's modest at the same time.

You cannot interpret things literally, if you do your going to have a lot of problems.

Me, I come from a south Asian, Pakistani background, the fashion is very different. She discusses the cultural differences behind clothing.

Colour is a big part of modesty too, some people say that colourful clothing draws to much attention to yourself, to much attention to your body. Its very complex, in India and Pakistan you find a lot of the colour palate is very bright and colourful. Some people might say only wear white or only wear black, but you want to add colour and patterns, you want to look nice.

Appendix 6

Non hijab wearing 2 (NH2)

Background

- “I was born and brought up in Hampstead; I'm in-between Golders green and west Hampstead. “
- Domestic Violence Specialist
- “Ethnically, I'm Pakistani by background and religiously we're Muslim.”

Modesty and modest dress

“In terms of modest dress, I don't wear hijab or traditional clothes. But having said that there is still an expectation on how I should dress, so I wouldn't wear short sleeves I don't wear really tight clothes. My family don't wear hijabs, but we are still expected to wear loosely fitting clothes, and to not wear revealing clothes. So I have worn short sleeves...Midlength sleeves are expectable anything higher than that its like 'can you go put a coat on please'.”

“We never got the clothes lecture.”

“When you look at us you wouldn't think we were following, or practicing.”

“It happened as we got older, we naturally started dressing a dressing a certain way. (this coincided with puberty)”

“I never wore skirts or dresses because I looked older, even though I was 11.”

“It's perfectly expectable for us to wear dresses but we would wear tights with them, really thick black tights or leggings. Even then my skirt length has to be to my knee. I'm quite tall, and I have an issue with (clothing) being too short on me. My mum will comment if I am wearing something too short...“I don't want people looking at you a certain way” not because it says it in our religion it's because she doesn't want us attracting the wrong type of attention from people. Because I work quite late, I travel late and she doesn't like us dressing provocatively or in bright colours.”

Her mum says: “Can you not put that much make up if your going to be coming back at 1am, I don't want you to get into some kind of incident”

“If you're really tall and your wearing red you attract far more attention”

“I would feel really uncomfortable when I wear really tight clothes”

Discussing clothing in her job

“Has to go to court “some of the men do look you up and down”

“It can be sexist – a lot of them don't know what I do, I'm a domestic abuse specialist, a lot of them don't realise that, they think I'm a court lister, an usher or a witness care volunteer... I'm asked to come into court to give my opinion on a case. The men talk to you a certain way. They do tend to be sexist depending on what you're wearing.”

Court outfit/work outfit

“It would have to be a full on suit, blazer, trousers, crisp shirt, minimal jewellery, hair tied back, natural looking make up some bold lipstick. I have a full face of make up on when I go to court, that helps a lot, I have gone in on days when I haven’t worn make up, and I’m treated totally differently.”

“If I am power dressed, someone will get up and ask ‘how can I help you?’”

“So clothes do make a difference with how you are treated.”

What would you define modesty as?

“A lot of people would be turned off by the word modest that could suggest that anyone who isn’t dressed the way you are is immodest. So I don’t like the term.”

“A lot of people use the word modest clothing to describe religious clothing and that puts off people. I think maybe it could just be called clothing, not put a label on it. You’ve got all these people like H&M cashing in on modest clothing.”

“Long cardigans, long tops, they exist on their own anyway, they don’t have the label of modest clothing so it’s up to the person how they are putting different piece of clothing together to make their outfit.”

“I don’t think it unifies people, I think it alienates people.”

“From my own perspective, I think it’s more what you’re comfortable in and that it’s not provocative. You want people to talk to you not talk to your legs, or your cleavage or your arms, you want them to talk to you as an equal.”

Shopping habits

I shop in a variety of stores, at the moment I am trying to shop ethically, it’s really difficult. We then discussed ethical clothing and factories.

But yes I do shop a majority on the high street, Dorothy Perkins, New Look, Zara. Dorothy Perkins because they have a tall range, which is affordable. I only discovered ASOS recently. My jeans were always slightly shorter than everybody else’s.

We then discussed the lack of options in stores for tall women.

Buys some things from M&S but “doesn’t agree with their politics”.

“I have been looking into vegan brands, I don’t wear leather. I don’t wear things made from goose feathers or things made from wool, I’m transitioning to being vegan, so it effects a lot of my choices in clothes. Vegan brands are usually based in US.”

“If we do go to the mosque, I can get away with wearing western clothes but it would be long, for example like a long dress and then have jeans on underneath, and then a cardigan.”

“I wouldn’t normally wear that out, but that’s what would wear, something long that covers my lower body.”

“Any old scarf for praying.”

Digital Visibility

“There is lots of controversy around them as well, which is interesting Dina Tokio, she’s under a lot of controversy, and Noor who did the Playboy cover as well.”

Dina Toki: “a lot of people talk about how she’s not wearing hijab so there is a lot of controversy around that, I’m not really that bothered by it, I think its great, she’s representing. It’s nice to see people from your community representing on billboards or whatever, its nice, it’s great. I think it is important to include all aspects of communities, regardless of there background I current mainstream campaigns.” Pro for anyone to be represented.

Appendix 7

Hijab wearing 2 (HW2)

- North West London

What being Muslim means to her

I was born into a Muslim family; I was raised as a Muslim. It's defiantly an important part of my identity. I think the label itself means different things at different times, so when certain things happen you might feel you have to visibly show your identity, but then it could mean something different. For me its really spiritual, but then there is also the political rhetoric of a diaspora, do I fit in here, do I fit in there, I'm not really sure and then religion means something as an identity and identification. When I look at my friends, who are Muslim, they all come from different diaspora backgrounds, part the religion is a thing, and means you have had a similar cultural upbringing, in that sense it becomes a really big part of your identity, its an important part spiritually, identity and your visible identity.

Visible identity – reference to clothing

Yes, I wear a hijab.

Modesty in terms of clothing

I personally don't think anything is immodest; you can wear what you want and still be modest. For me I don't believe modesty is necessarily to do with a medium of clothing, that's one means of representing yourself, though clothing but I don't think modesty is something that comes from clothing.

Hijab

Started wearing it when she was 18.

I always wanted to wear one when I was younger, but my parents (didn't want me to) growing up in that post 9/11 world they were really anxious about it all, so I tried to wear it, but didn't think it was the right time. Then I went to university, I'm 18, I'm an adult I want to make my own choice, so I just put it on, when I first put it on it was more spiritual, I think it means something different everyday, sometimes it becomes a mark of your identity, sometimes it's deeply spiritual, sometimes it can be political too (people politicise it). It's politicised recently because of the rhetoric at the moment. Could maybe be a visual representation of my faith, but I'm not so sure.

Style

Jeans and a top or a jumper. I have one staple, my silver trainers. I wear a lot of grey and black.

I usually do wear long sleeved things, it's I always think if I wasn't a Muslim, would I still wear long sleeves, and I think, yes I would its just more for personal style/personal preference. But I don't know is it because it's kind of conditioned into me because its part of religious dress or is it that it's my choice and I do actually feel more comfortable. So if I were to wear a tshirt I might wear a jumper on top or a top underneath, is that me or is that my upbringing or my faith I don't know.

It's usually what ever I feel comfortable with. I will wear trousers, cropped trousers, but not actually cropped, I'm actually just tall, I'm 5'10 so sometimes clothes can be shorter on me. My ankle is often exposed; I don't give a shit really.

Shopping habits

Combination of high-street and online, I never used to like asos but I really appreciate the fact that you can return things for free. When ever there is a sale on, with student discount.

Bloggers/ youtubers

I know about this modest brand in New York called Mimi..., their clothes are so nice, but very expensive.

I do watch some, Dina Tokio, I never massively engaged with her when I was younger, but recently she's been doing interesting videos. She's speaking out, I love that she's using her platform to do that, and to take things further.

I think she's incredible and I really appreciate what she'd doing.

Habiba de silver created a line of skin colour hijabs, I don't really get it. She's created a hijab line in different skin colours called "SKIN".

Would you consider yourself a modest dresser?

I guess by the definition of saying I don't think that modesty is an outwardly thing I could be. Yes why not, why allow others to define it. I guess it's a spiritual thing, what do you define modesty to be. Modesty is not just the way you dress, it's also the way you speak around people.

Appendix 8

Practicing Jewish Woman (PJW)

- Is currently on maternity leave, she lives in Willesden Green, North London.

Background

She grew up in Croydon “I always identified as a secular Jew, so Jewish identity was always important to me” “I would wear a skirt to synagogue” “around the same time I got married I became more religious in lots of ways, so I now don’t refer to myself less as secular and more as practicing, which has had a knock on effect to how I dress, but it doesn’t define me” “I probably identify more as a feminist, then religious” I think the word modesty is quite complicated from that intersectional point of view”

She says that her husband made her more religious her and her husband met at university, he enjoyed keeping Shabbat, her was really enjoying it and it was enhancing his life a lot, he continued to keep Shabbat and I spent a lot of time with him enjoying the time we spent together on Saturday, and in time it evolved to me just jumping into keeping Shabbat. We now go together to synagogue; I enjoy the community and lots of aspects of religious practice that I never thought I would when I was younger.”

Definition for modest:

“not dressing sexually, provocatively and covering up.” “What modesty is would be covering up, and what it isn’t would be wearing provocative clothing, showing cleavage/boobs, and short skirts or showing your belly wouldn’t be modest.”

But she does comment that; “I do think it’s a problematic concept in terms of people telling women what to wear”

“I don’t look at my clothes and think hmm what’s modest enough for me to wear outside, expect at synagogue I maybe do”

“but if you look at what I wear everyday then I’d say that without a doubt it’s modest, if I’m going ‘out out’ its more likely to be tight fitting, like black jeans and a short skirt, but I don’t feel comfortable in a short skirt, so I am more likely to wear a nice tight fitting top that doesn’t show cleavage, I am not comfortable dressing in an immodest way, but it’s more to do with comfort”

Style

Daily basis: today I’m wearing a maxi skirt which I got off amazon it’s teal, it’s really nice and a sleeveless top that goes up to my neck and a hoody, to keep warm

Generally I’ll wear long maxi skirts, I’ll wear them on Fridays, as Shabbat comes in it’s easier so I don’t have to get changed. I’ll wear them even if I’m not going to synagogue, I’m going to Friday night dinner, the skirt is more traditional. Saturdays I’ll be wearing a skirt as well, the rest of the week will either be wearing a skirt or jeans for comfort and for work probably a long skirt or black trousers and shirts, usually not terribly tight fitting because I am a

teacher, but I will wear the occasional t-shirt, I don't feel like I have to hide my body, so I wear a mixture of skirts and trousers.

Hair covering wise, I'll cover my hair if I'm going to synagogue, or somewhere else really Jewish, where it is kind of expected, and I do it in my own way, so I wear lots of colourful headscarf's, rather than a boring hat, which I find really middle aged. I like to combine different coloured scarfs to match my outfits. When discussing the different styles in Stamford Hill she comments that it is a cultural thing because they are Hardedi, she continues saying that they have nothing in common with her/her religion. She describes how people in Hendon cover their hair, where as people in her community don't unless they are going to synagogue (then they wear hats).

Someone who wears a scarf all the time, and someone who wears a wig all the time are probably equally religious. People who wear wigs are in a religious community where they all wear wigs, where as people who wear scarfs might exist in a community where actually lots of people don't cover, but they have chosen to. Often people from less religious communities become more religious and they want to show that and wear it in a scarf, even though they stand out more than the wigs.

I wouldn't wear a wig, it would be really weird, but the scarf is my way making of head covering fun, a way of self-expression.

We also discussed the price of wigs compared to the far more affordable option of scarfs.

Digital visibility

Not aware of modest bloggers "I don't think of modesty as a defining factor, and I don't feel restricted by it in the way that people who are more traditionally religious maybe would"

Where she shops

"I'm not like, oh I've got to find modest options I can wear, I find t-shirts and skirts wherever online"

Modesty "not a restriction" "I would rather wear something convenient"

"I don't feel bound to the laws of modesty by any sort of religious authority or expectations of my community"

"Recently I buy most of my clothes from amazon particularly maxi skirts that I like, I used to buy maxi skirts from boohoo"

Her interpretation of modest dress from the Torah "It says in Leviticus that a woman should not dress as a man and vice versa, and I believe that is why some women wont wear trousers, because trousers are seen as mens clothes, now obviously lots of women these days say that trousers aren't mens clothing anymore and we can wear them" "there is also something about not showing the divide of the legs, so in terms of immodesty it (highlights) the vagina... that might be another reason as to why people don't wear trousers"

"With hair covering the general idea is to cover your hair before God. As soon as you're married you are supposed to save your hair for your husband, that's why only married women wear hats in synagogue"

“It’s a sign that you’re not available” (covering your hair)

“I think its quite appalling how little I know”

“I am quite laissez faire about it”

“No-one in my community has ever some up to me and asked why I don’t cover up, and also no one has ever taught me the text or the reasons why we do it, because it is not that kind of community.”

Appendix 9

Young Jewish Woman - YJW

- Bought up in a liberal/reform Jewish household and was in secular Jewish education until sixth form.
- Lives in London towards Essex and lives with her family whilst she works in the City.

Background

“Were traditional, but we’re not particularly religious, I grew up with a strong Jewish influence, I was in Jewish education from the age of 2 or 3 until I was 16.”

“We’ve always kept Kosher, but we haven’t really dress particularly Orthodox, but I have always been surrounded by people that have been. At school there was a group of girls that would dress more traditionally... and parents would turn up to school in traditional orthodox clothes”

“I’d class myself as liberal/reform but I do go to an orthodox synagogue”

Clothing

“I’d have to cover my knee caps and cover my shoulders” –when discussing synagogue clothing

“Some women are so religious that they wont even show their elbows”

“My mum will wear a hat to show that she’s married, and to show that she is respecting god by covering her head”

“It’s a symbol of your relationship status - Certain people keep to certain things... its as you want to take it”

When discussing wig & hat combinations she comments that “the shietals look very realistic, they do it so they know that they’re being respecting god and respecting their husband, but then they have the hat on top, which is for everyone else”

“In reform and liberal synagogues you can wear trousers and men and women sit together. But in orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately.”

“In my synagogue because it’s orthodox I would always wear a skirt, I wear it so that it’s on my knee because I’m tall, but in theory it should be longer, you shouldn’t show the knee.”

Ceremonial dress when at her bat mitzvah “the thing that girls do is wear American style prom dresses...”

“My dress had straps on, but for the service I had something on top to cover my shoulders, and again it was to my knee”

Modesty

What was her ‘interpretation’ of modesty: “not looking like a slut, it’s how I want my grandparents to see me” she wears less revealing clothes around her grandparents “I try to dress more modestly around them because I

respect them” she links respect and modesty “I respect them and want them to see me in a modest way”

What the Jewish interpretation of modesty is: She discusses how she went to Israel as part of a leadership program as part of a Jewish group: “it was very casual but if we were going to a religious place cover up” she details that they went clubbing one night and she wore, what she normally would in England: “shorts and a crop top” “we had to walk past a religious street on the way to a club, there were orthodox men covering their eyes, shielding themselves and shaking their heads”.

Her everyday dress would be: “tights and skirt or jeans and a top or jumper” wouldn’t wear something too revealing because of her office job “as long as it’s something I feel comfortable in, I’m not bothered by clothes that might be exposing too much...” “I like to think that what I do wear doesn’t stick out from what the norm is” she is a follower of trends.


She shops at standard high street shops as well as online eg ASOS. She says that if she were going to a religious event eg Batmizah that she would still shop at the same stores, but that it would be a lot harder. When she was packing for her Israel trip she bought covering clothing, and found that H&M was good “it’s not flattering but it is practical” “a lot of the longer clothing (in highstreets) isn’t the most flattering or well fitted, it’s all very plain and basic”. Expresses her annoyance with the lack of modest clothing available in stores.

Discussing what their take on modest fashion is “covering up and not exposing too much, if I’m going to a religious event I will cover up according to Jewish law, covering my shoulders, covering my knees and my chest area ”

Digital visibility

Modest fashion bloggers: mimumaxi she’s seen through Facebook, she comments that it’s nice to see less frumpy clothing, and they prove that you can dress modestly whilst still being fashionable.

Appendix 10 – Rabbi interview

Leah Jordan 

17 January 2017 11:07

To: Annoush Kerianoff

Re: Ask the Rabbi: "Academic research into modest dress"

[Inbox - Gmail](#) 

Hello Annoush,

Liberal Judaism, as you may already know (and implied by its name!), locates itself on the progressive end of interpretation of Jewish customs and law. That is to say, when it comes to modesty and dress -- or to most other ritualistic practices -- we follow what we often call 'informed choice.' That is, the practitioner - in this case, the woman making these choices for herself - explores the issue herself, with rabbis, teachers, reading, other community members, and makes an informed decision for herself based on her understanding of Jewish tradition plus the Enlightenment/modern value of individual, personal choice.

There is a long history of conversation around modesty in dress in Judaism, for both men and women, but with the emphasis more heavily in the tradition on customs around female dress. A Liberal Jewish critique - which I as a feminist rabbi would also hold - is that the over-concern with female modesty over male modesty shows in Jewish tradition arguably too much concern with the male gaze, female sexual objectification, and lack of understanding that women too also have sexual agency, sexual desire/libido, etc., in that the tradition often focuses on male desire toward women and why they should therefore dress modestly rather than vice versa. However, there are many instances in the Talmud when this is complicated by acknowledgement of female action and intent...

All this is to say, I would recommend reading more for your MA thesis on this subject. Two really excellent books on this subject I'd suggest:

-- *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality*, Michael Satlow
-- *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, Daniel Boyarin

And specifically for a take on issues of modesty in Jewish tradition, I'd recommend this podcast lecture from Mechon Hadar, a New York-based institution that engages very seriously in traditional Jewish law but from a dynamic angle. Here, 'tzniut' is the legal Hebrew word for 'modesty':

<https://www.mechonhadar.org/torah-resource/embodied-tzniut>

For similar, fascinating and important conversations in Islam, I'd recommend Dr. Madawi al-Rasheed's writing on 'behind the veil' for women in Islam. She's based in London, either at KCL or LSE, I believe.

I hope this is a place from which to start! Please write me back if there's anything more I can help with- and good luck.

Best,
Rabbi Leah Jordan

Consent Forms – Appendix 11

University of Huddersfield
School of Art, Design and Architecture

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Exploring Modest dress amongst women within London communities

Name of Researcher: Annoushik Kerlanoff

Participant Identifier Number:

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

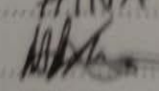
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I understand that all my responses will be anonymised.

I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

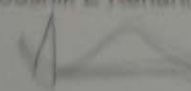
I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: HINA

Signature of Participant: 

Date: ~~27~~ 20.2.2017 20.2.2017

Name of Researcher: Annoushik E Kerlanoff

Signature of Researcher: 

Date:

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Exploring Modest dress amongst women within London communities

Name of Researcher: Annoushik Kerianoff

Participant Identifier Number:

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- I understand that all my responses will be anonymised.
- I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: *madeleine Xenia*.....

Signature of Participant: *[Signature]*.....

Date: *10/02/2017*.....

Name of Researcher: Annoushik E Kerianoff

Signature of Researcher: *[Signature]*

Date:

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Exploring Modest dress amongst women within London communities

Name of Researcher: Annoushik Kerianoff

Participant Identifier Number:

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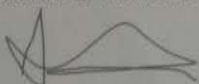
I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: AUSHAH MEHMOUD

Signature of Participant: 

Date: 27/03/17

Name of Researcher: Annoushik E Kerianoff

Signature of Researcher: 

Date:

Participant Consent Form

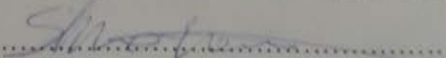
Title of Research Study: Exploring Modest dress amongst women within London communities

Name of Researcher: Annoushik Kerianoff

Participant Identifier Number:

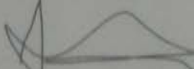
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- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I understand that all my responses will be anonymised.
- I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: Sarah Mohammad

Signature of Participant: 

Date: 3/4/2017

Name of Researcher: Annoushik E Kerianoff

Signature of Researcher: 

Date:

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Exploring Modest dress amongst women within London communities.

Name of Researcher: Annoushik Kerlanoff

Participant Identifier Number:

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- I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: Michaela Liebman

Signature of Participant: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 3.3.2017

Name of Researcher: Annoushik E Kerlanoff

Signature of Researcher: [Handwritten Signature]

Date:

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