

Assignment 2 – Review Essay

Basit T (1997) 'I want more freedom, but not too much': British Muslim girls and the dynamism of family values. *Gender and Education*, Volume 9 (4).

How do you perceive other ethnic groups? Do you base it on stereotypical views? Or do you know the reasons behind things that are done differently? Ethnicity is "A sense of being different than other groups because of cultural tradition, ancestry, national origin, history, or religion." (Google). (<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=&oi=define&defl=en&q=define:Ethnicity>). There are many different types of ethnic groups in society, such as Asians, Whites, and Afro- Caribbean's. However, every group perceives and disagrees with the way the other groups handle certain situations, due to their differences in cultural traditions. For example, in the English culture, once you get married you have your own house, however with the Muslim culture, the wife has to move in with the boys' family, and however this is slowly changing over time. This essay is based on an article written by Tehmina N. Basit, which focuses on British Muslim girls and the dynamism of family values, and will consider the reasons why some ethnic groups do thing differently to other ethnic groups and also the stereotypical views behind it. Also including how English cultures perceive the Muslim culture and how the Muslim culture perceives the English culture, and the conflicts between what is right and wrong in this society.

"South Asian origins are mainly close knit, cohesive units and family loyalties are very strong". Basit, T (1997). This quote shows Basil, T's opinion of South Asian origins; this can be mostly true as they respect their elders and help each other out when needed.

Which shows that they are close knit. They live as a big family this shows that some South Asian families are cohesive units and that their family loyalties do play a big role in their everyday lives. They share happiness and love within it. Again this displays the features that Basil.T describes South Asian origin people of having. Babysitters are not an option, when it comes to children as they are always “taken to all functions and ceremonies instead of being left behind with child minders”. Basit, T (1997). However the South Asian families stereotypically perceive English families as the “elders appear to command little love or respect and are sent into homes instead of being looked after by the younger generation”. Basit, T (1997). This can support the argument mentioned earlier about how different ethnic groups can disagree with many issues that are different within the different groups. Also some ethnic groups may perceive the way people from other ethnic groups handle certain situations as wrong. This is solely due to differences in the traditions that arise within different cultures. The above quote is an example of how some South Asian families can disagree with English families (people from different ethnic groups) views on certain issues. Also to support this J.S. Dosanjh (1997) says “Grand parents are not at hand to look after the next generation and to pass on the cultural and religious values of the English community”.

Therefore Asians think this is shameful behavior, which cannot be tolerated in the Asian community, as their children need to be slightly restricted in order to follow in the right path in the community and to help the family. However this is again just a stereotypical view. “Elders are rarely found to be living on their own, let alone in old peoples home”. Basit, T (1997). To support this Paul A Singh, (1998) says “the Muslim culture is strict

but their family stick together, and no one is left on their own”. Although when it comes to education, Asian families are extremely strict for their children to educate themselves and would do anything for them to stay on the right track. Muslim parents believe that “their children’s future will be good, if they are educated, if the child is uneducated she will not be respected in this society”. Ghazi – Walid Falah (2005). Also the reason why education is so important is because then the child can stand on her own feet, and take responsibility of their own life and take control of their surrounding and society around them, rather than society taking control of them. That is the reason why Asian families restrict their children from excessive freedom, as they are “worried about the perceived influence of a largely secular society”. Basit, T (1997). From the above quote it can be concluded that Asian families are concerned with outside influences and also what other communities may say as mentioned in the quote.

The children’s parents believe by restricting freedom, their children will always be on the right track; therefore “this is the reason why some parents and community leaders even favor separate schools for Muslim girls”. Basit, T (1997). However this does not solve the problem because children “behave differently at home and at school”. Basit, T (1997). Which means children who act differently, may not be able to talk to their parents about specific topics they need help in, which restricts their communication with their parents, and produces boundaries.

Therefore children want to discuss it with other children and teachers. These are the consequences of Muslim parents being too restrictive on their children, as their children

can't be open with their parents and discuss real important issues in society, in which can benefit them in the future. Therefore the school teachers believe "that the girls' reticence and submissiveness was the consequence of lack of freedom". Basit, T (1997). Some Muslim parents gave their children some sort of freedom; however it was controlled, because whenever they could go out, the girls had to take someone older with them, and still not stay out late. Most children were dropped to school in the morning, and straight away picked up after school. "Fathers also picked up and dropped their sons and not just their daughters". Basit, T (1997). This shows their parents gave them very limited freedom by not allowing their children to walk home by themselves. However Paul A Singh, (1998) argues that "With boys there is no problem, they have so much more freedom than girls do in Muslim families". This is however an old Muslim tradition and it has been brought about because of the culture and traditions. Therefore this shows that boys have more freedom than girls do. Therefore Fredric (1995), argues that with all children

"If parents restrict their children, for example, if he or she should be at home by 9 pm, but all her peers can stay out till 11 pm, the child will perceive that her freedom is being threatened by her parents. To resolve that freedom, she may act directly and simply stay out later".

Therefore this shows that too much restriction by parents, allow the children to take the wrong step and to not know what's right from wrong anymore. However this could just be an argument based on conflicting views between different ethnic groups. However J.S.

Dosanjh, (1997) argues that “this tradition outlook on family unity, cohesion, stability and limitations has distinct advantages for the healthy development of young children”. Muslim parents trust their children; however they do not trust the society and people living in it. Therefore they enforce such restrictions onto their children to protect them from such disasters. This can be argued as right or wrong but it is mainly a viewpoint of a particular culture, which will not be the same as other cultures. However Muslim children understand the reasons behind their restrictions, because they have “seen the consequences of freedom”. Basit, T (1997). However Ghazi – Walid Falah, (2005), argues that “girls should get freedom, but a limited freedom, not so they can do whatever they want, but within what’s respectable”. Which therefore is reasonable, compared to no freedom at all. The above quote can be seen as very stereotypical, because it is implying that girls who have freedom are not respectable, which is not the case. However once again different cultures have a different perception of what respectable is.

Even though the English culture understands the reasons behind the restrictiveness in the Muslim culture, they still do not agree that children should be restricted with their freedom, as they have been brought up in a different culture to Muslim families. This shows that it can sometimes be difficult for people of different cultures and upbringing to understand the way in which Muslims perceive different things. Muslim families perceive the English culture as having more freedom to do as they please in life, as they “live in a nuclear family, rather than a collateral family”. J.S. Dosanjh, (1997). However Ghazi – Walid Falah, (2005), argues that

“Embracing a notion of freedom with limits could also be considered as an oppositional stance toward the dominance and perceived freedom of the “West” where women are believed to have “total” freedom that has resulted in nefarious self – indulgence, the breakdown of the family, and a general loss of morals”.

Therefore this shows that people with too much freedom can get corrupted, yet people with slightly less freedom, can enjoy life as well as be on the right path in society. However some children are used to staying at home and enjoying their time either by “cooking, reading or playing games”. Basit, T (1997). This is however just an assumption that has been made that many people may disagree with depending on their traditions and culture.

In conclusion it shows that traditions, culture and upbringing play a major role in today's society. People's perception of things differs mainly because of these factors. From the essay it can be concluded that the way in which Muslim families bring up their children, differs a fair bit from English cultures. This is because the traditions in the Muslim culture can be seen as strict therefore they will reinforce these traditions to their children. To a certain extent it is understandable how Muslim parents are restrictive of their children. However this may not be very obvious or understandable for some people, especially people who have been brought up in completely different environments. For example it may be easier for Hindus to understand the way Muslims are brought up because they have some similar views as they are of the same overall ethnic minority or being Asian. However for an English person to try and understand, it may be harder

because they are bought up completely differently, making it a lot harder. This can explain why they do perceive and understand things differently and think different things are right and wrong. It can sometimes be hard for Muslim families to find the right balance between how much freedom to give their children, because they may want to give them freedom but of they take on the stance of their culture they will have to reconsider how much freedom they give their children. This can bring up the topic of British Muslims, for whom it can sometimes be hard trying to stick to their original traditions in a place which has totally opposite traditions.

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