Dr Sahin’s work analyses and reviews the methods and mechanics currently dominant in the Islamic educational domain.

**Chapter 5 ‘Modes of Islamic Subjectivity among British Muslim Youth’**

In this chapter, Dr Sahin discusses his method of research, coined as the ‘Muslim Subjectivity Interview Schedule’ (MSIS) – a semi-structured interview study (p.119). Sahin further uses James Marcia’s theory of adolescent subjectivity to uncover the religious subjectivity of young Muslims which he categorises as diffused, foreclosed, exploratory or achieved. As for a diffused mode of Islamic subjectivity, he explains it is just being ‘culturally Muslim’ when the person has no commitment nor tries to explore the religious sphere of their life. The religiously diffused person is not necessarily an atheist or agnostic (p.122).
The foreclosed mode of Islamic subjectivity is a result of high commitment but zero exploration. Generally, a religiously foreclosed person’s lifeworld is moulded by their parent’s way of religiousness (p.129). This type of subjectivity is not necessarily a negative thing as his analysis shows that the highest level of prayer frequency observed by adolescents are with foreclosed mode of subjectivity (p.144). The study of the interviews showed that the foreclosed mode of Islamic subjectivity was more common in male participants.

In contrast, Sahin describes an exploratory mode of religious subjectivity as interpreting Islam in a Plural Matrix of belonging. This mode of ‘religious’ subjectivity is perhaps the most stressful phase of an adolescent. The participants admitted that they were experiencing two distinct sets of cultural practices in their lives, one at home which mostly related to Islam, and the other was the ‘outside culture’ referring to a secular western culture. The exploratory mode is when the adolescent needs to suspend themselves for a short period of time to make up their mind regarding which identity they are going to be adopting.

And finally, the achieved mode of Islamic subjectivity refers to when enough thinking and research has been done by oneself (self-effort) willingly to come to their own conclusion. This is the highest and praiseworthy level of religious subjectivity. It is the consequence of high religious commitment and exploration (p.121).

Despite Sahin’s syncretisation of James Marcia’s theory, the outcome seems somewhat ambiguous. The chapter title eludes to ‘British Muslim Youth’ indicating a national research study, whereas the analysis is only based on college students from Birmingham only.

Nevertheless, Sahin goes to some length to understand young Muslims growing up with a hybrid cultural experience. Sahin’s findings do show the need to re-think the theory and practice of Islamic education to address these perspectives.

Chapter 6: Attitudes towards Islam and Islamic Subjectivity

The author argues that although challenges are faced by young Muslims in the West, there are also deep social changes which have resulted from colonisation, Westernisation and modernisation in the Muslim majority world too. However, the role of Islam remains central to the societies in the Muslim world. Sahin states that the concept of re-thinking and renewal has always been an element of Islamic tradition (the concept of *ijtihad*), thus his research on young Kuwaiti Muslim’s sole purpose was to give an innovative solution in re-thinking the Islamic education in Kuwait (p.151).
He uses the same research method which was used for the British adolescents to study the attitudes towards Islam and the formation of religious identity. The questionnaire was completed by 2,432 students aged between 15 and 23 years who were attending school, college and university. 203 students were randomly selected for the Muslim Subjectivity Interview Schedule (MSIS). This study revealed a deep link between religious behaviour and attitude towards religion. 24% of the participants associated themselves with religious movements and half of them expressed that Muslims must be part of a religious movement to safeguard their faiths. Interestingly, Sahin’s findings state that 46.3% of the Kuwaiti young Muslims thought that most the people in their society were in a state of disbelief. Some of the key findings in this chapter reflect parallels with the British Young Muslims such as most participants being in a foreclosed mode of Islamic subjectivity.

Sahin’s research also reveals that the education of Islamic studies at a university level is to nurture conformity rather than reflection. There was no difference between Islamic education at a higher level and the Islamic education students received at high school (p.162). Though Sahin’s study reveals this weakness of the higher education system, it would have been appropriate to remind the reader that not all Muslim countries education system is structured in such a way. For example, at Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Sahin makes a number of recommendations to the educational policy-makers in Kuwait, to rethink Islamic education, to improve the teaching and learning methods, to change the curriculum and to train the Imāms and teachers in psychology and sociology of religion.

To conclude, this is no doubt a very timely written book for modern times. The author has carried out a tremendous amount of research in preparation for his work. However, the analysis seemed unclear and the research somewhat out of the wider context. The language was verbose although the contents do highlight some interesting theories about diverse perspectives in a rapidly developing sociological context.

– By Masumur Rahman