

**A discourse analysis of print media constructions of ‘Muslim’ people in
British newspapers**

by

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Abstract

This research study aimed to examine how the identity of ‘Muslim’ people is constructed in British print media today, and whether or not these constructions promote or undermine a xeno-racist project. The research draws on the idea that identity is partly constructed through representation, with an emphasis on how language can be used to construct and position people in different ways. Using a social constructionist paradigm, the study further considers the role that print media has in providing a discursive field within which the construction and reproduction of racist attitudes and ideologies in contemporary global society can take place. Sixty-five newspaper articles were selected from the online archives of British newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* using systematic random sampling. These were analysed using the six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis outlined by Carla Willig. To provide a more fruitful account, the analysis also incorporated the methods of Potter and Wetherell whose focus is on the function of discourse, as well as van Langenhove and Harré’s focus on subject positioning, and Parker’s use of Foucauldian analysis which looks at power distributions. The analysis revealed that Muslims are discursively constructed as a direct politicised or terror threat, often drawing on discourses of *sharia* law, and Muslim-Christian relationships. They are also constructed as a cultural threat, drawing on discourses of isolation, oppressed women, the veil/headscarf, identity, visibility and integration. The analysis also showed some variation in constructions, and these extended from the racialization of Muslims to showing the compatibility between Islamic and western values. This study discusses the form these different constructions take and the possible implications these constructions might have in contributing toward a prejudiced and largely negative image of Islam and Muslims.

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1. Introduction

For Muslims living in the West today, it can be said that their ‘Muslim’ religious identity has been racialised as an essential category of difference and inferiority (Bleich, 2009). This racialisation of Muslims indicates a shift from more traditional, obvious markers of difference, i.e. race or ethnicity, to newer, more prevalent markers of a cultural or socio-religious nature (Allen, 2005). This shift from race to religion is understood as a response to key political and social events where notions of a Muslim identity are brought to the fore. Of more importance though, is the idea that this ‘shift’ indicates the socially constructed, discursive nature of identity categories. Concurrent with this has been a shift in social psychological theory from conceptualising racial prejudice as a cognitive process to a social practice (Verkuyten, 2003). As a social practice, racial prejudice is seen to perform a function; that function often being the legitimisation of unequal patterns of power between social groups (Verkuyten, 2003). As such the construction of identity categories is believed to be imbued with power differentials. This research study therefore concerns itself with the socially constructed nature of identity categories, and considers how these categories are constructed through the use of power to legitimise social divisions.

More specifically, this study focuses on how ‘Muslim’ identity categories are discursively constructed in British newspapers. The assumption is that Muslims, a minority religious group in Britain, are subjected to the same processes of prejudice and inequality as minority ethnic and racial groups. This racial prejudice based on cultural and/or religious difference is called “cultural essentialism” (Verkuyten, 2003, p. 376), “new racism” (Verkuyten, 2003, p. 379), and/or “xeno-racism” (Fekete, 2004, p. 4). The socially constructed nature of identity means that these racisms are often effected through talk, text or representation. Subsequently the media, as a key site of representation, is seen to have an implicit role in identity construction and the production and reproduction of discursive racism (Said, 1981; van Dijk, 1992). In the Literature Review chapter that follows, I discuss these concepts and issues of identity in more depth.

1.1 Outline of report

Chapter two of this report includes a brief historical/social context of the notion of a Muslim identity in Britain. I provide an in-depth discussion of the postmodern theoretical approach used here, and situate my theory and research within a social constructionist paradigm. This is followed by a discussion on the processes of identity construction, theories of discursive racism, and the role of print media. I then situate the research within existing research literature, and outline my research question and aims. Chapter three provides an in-depth discussion of my methodology and how the research was carried out. This includes a more comprehensive discussion of the social constructionist paradigm used, and looks more closely at discourse analysis as a theory and method. In chapter four, the analysis and discussion of the research data is presented. Chapter five contains a concluding overview of the findings and further discussion. Chapter six looks at the limitations of the research, considers implications for further research, and the importance of reflexivity in social constructionist research.

2. Context and Literature Review

2.1 Muslims in Britain

Although no reliable statistics for religious affiliation exist at the national level, estimates put the number of Muslims living in Britain at around two million (Ansari, 2002; Bleich, 2009). This means that after Christianity, Islam is the second largest religion and Muslims the fastest growing religious population (Peach, 2006). The Muslim population in Britain represents a wide range of racial and ethnic diversity. The largest group of British Muslims are of South Asian origin, predominantly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent, but Muslims have also migrated from regions including Africa, Cyprus, Malaysia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe (Ansari, 2002). Additionally there are also many white British converts (Ansari, 2002). Until recently, migrant Muslims have mostly been considered in terms of these cultural or ethnic backgrounds without their religious identity having much resonance (Adamson, 2011). Over the last two decades, however, ‘Islam’ has taken on “more significance as an identity category” in Britain and other European/Western countries (Adamson, 2011, p. 902). This means that Muslim individuals are increasingly identified by their religious affiliation over racial, ethnic or national identity categories (Adamson, 2011; Bleich, 2009).

The emergence of religion as a salient identity category is believed to have occurred in response to key social and political events involving Muslims. One such event was the ‘Rushdie affair’ where Muslims were enraged by the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, a book containing what were seen as blasphemous, negative images of Islam. The violent, angry backlash by certain Muslim groups across the world resulted in a media bolstered image of Muslims as homogenous, violent, backward and opposed to Western liberal ideals such as freedom of speech and human rights (Hellyer, 2007). This characterisation of Muslims later intensified in Britain during other key political events like the Gulf War in 1991, the 9/11 terror attacks on the United States in 2001, riots involving Muslim youth in the north of England in 2001, and the 7/7 London bombings in 2005 (Hellyer, 2007). The 7/7 bombings were particularly influential in bringing forth the idea of religion as a salient identity category in Britain. This is because the perpetrators shared the same national identity

in that they were British born citizens, university educated, with middle class characteristics, but they were distinguishable by their ‘Muslim’ identity (Ali, 2008).

2.2 Identifying Islam and Muslims

To speak of a ‘Muslim’ identity presents some difficulty though, because a Muslim religious identity could range from “devout adherence to orthodox Islamic practice, to nominal affiliation, and [this] is negotiated in complex, shifting and multi-faceted ways” (Ansari, 2002, p. 12). To begin with though, a traditional or literal understanding of a ‘Muslim’ is one who follows the religion of Islam. The word *Islam* originates from the Arabic root word *salaam* which means ‘peace’, and the literal translation of *Islam*, from Arabic to English, is ‘surrender’ (Ali, Liu & Humedian, 2004). The word *Muslim* translates as ‘one who submits to the will of Allah (God)’. Therefore, to be a Muslim is to submit voluntarily to the will of God and to “seek peace on the basis of this submission” (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p.7). This peace is pursued within a parameter of concepts and values provided by the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* (sayings and actions/the example of the Prophet Muhammad) (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003, p. 7). Muslims also refer to “a universe of meaning” constructed around a number of fundamental principles (Ramadan, 2004, p. 9). These principles are faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage, and with rare exception, are recognised by Muslims everywhere (Ramadan, 2004).

The above definition of a ‘Muslim’ refers to those who have accepted Islam as a religion and integrative worldview that provides a moral perspective on every aspect of human endeavour, according to Inayatullah and Boxwell (2003) citing Sardar (1991). The term ‘Muslim’ today however, is applied as an objective and subjective category used to identify a group of people. As a social category, the term ‘Muslim’ has become largely ambiguous as it is often used in reference to both religion and culture (Eastmond, 1998). It is necessary, therefore, to understand that the term “Muslim”, in itself, does not indicate anything about how the religion Islam is understood; neither does it refer to the religious ideas or values held by a particular person (Carlbom, 2003). This presents a postmodern shift from a literal meaning of what it means to be ‘Muslim’ – that of being one who submits completely to God’s will, to a more symbolic, ambiguous term where meaning is replaced with representation.

As indicated above, Muslims in Western countries are of varied ethnicities, cultures, and have diverse historical experiences that have contributed to their existence as minority groups (Ben Moussa, 2004). Along with this national or ethnic heterogeneity, Muslims are also different in terms of education and social class (Carlbom, 2003). Broad Islamic traditions further construct difference: there are Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims (Carlbom, 2003). This heterogeneity influences how individuals interpret, practice and incorporate religion into their daily lives (Ben Moussa, 2004). Sanders (1997), cited in Carlbom (2003), identified four groups: ethnic, cultural, religious, and political Muslims. An ethnic Muslim is one who does not necessarily practice Islam, but who was born in a context where there is a predominant Islamic tradition. A cultural Muslim internalises Muslim cultural traditions, and thinks with the help of Islamic categories. A religious Muslim has certain religious beliefs and practices, and a political Muslim believes that Islam is an all-embracing system for society.

The groups identified above reflect a trend whereby attempts are made to categorise Muslims. In reality however, classifying such a heterogeneous grouping into simple categories is not so easy. The diversity among Muslims makes it difficult to define them as a group officially (Ansari, 2002). In Ansari (2002, p. 12) three definitions are cited: For Kettani (1986), Muslims “affirm Muhammed to be the last messenger of Allah and hold his teachings to be true, irrespective of the extent to which they know about his teachings, or the extent to which they are able to live according to them”. For Nielsen (1987) Muslims are those for whom Islam has significance in the ordering of their daily lives but “it is necessary to be aware of the differing factors (social, economic, cultural and generational) which may contribute to vary the application of ideas of Islam ... at both the individual and the collective level”. Lastly, for Halliday (1999) “Islam may, in some contexts, be the prime form of political and social identity, but it is never the sole form and is often not the primary one”. Given the diverse, complex nature of identity all three definitions are drawn on in this study.

Notwithstanding the complex nature of religious identity, and their diverse racial/ethnic/national backgrounds, the experience of British Muslims for the most part is that they need to negotiate living with a minority identity in a non-Muslim state (Ansari, 2002). And following the events of 9/11 and 7/7, Muslim religious identities have increasingly been subjected to external social constructions and “used to organise social inequalities normally

associated with racial minorities” (Byng, 2008, cited in Nagra, 2011, p. 427). As with race, class and ethnicity, religion is now used as a means for social stratification (Viswanthan, 1998, cited in Nagra, 2011). Religious minority identity can therefore be understood as susceptible to the same “social processes of systematic inequality, external labelling, and otherness as other ethnic and racial groups” (Nagra, 2011, p. 427). These social inequalities and external labelling are often manifest in forms of racial prejudice and cultural essentialism.

2.3 Identity categories: Race, culture, ethnicity, and religion

Before looking more closely at the complex nature of identity construction and how this can lead to racial prejudice and cultural essentialism, the relevant identity categories drawn on in this study are discussed below. These include race, culture, ethnicity and religion.

2.3.1 Race. Race as an identity category is generally defined in terms of physical characteristics like skin colour, facial features and hair type (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). These characteristics are understood as hereditary and common to particular populations (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). The term ‘race’ is thus often used in reference to the specific way in which collective differences are constructed and understood (Anthias, 1990). This is because identity is constructed through difference, and involves the categorisation of individuals into those who are similar and those who are not (Anthias, 1990; Hall, 2000). Race is therefore a “particular articulation of where and how the boundary” of those categories are constructed (Anthias, 1990, p. 22). These boundaries are considered to be based on immutable, fixed biological differences (Anthias, 1990).

Historically, people have commonly been divided into four main racial groups, but the view on ‘race’ used here, is based on that of Eriksen (1996) who comments on the “dubious descriptive value” (p.29) of the term. He explains that there has been so much interbreeding between human populations that to speak of fixed boundaries between races is meaningless. Moreover, drawing on modern genetics since race is seen as biologically based, Eriksen (1996) argues that the distribution of hereditary characteristics does not follow clear

boundaries. This means that there would be more variation within a 'racial' group than between groups. Accordingly, race is understood as a social construct with no objective existence. As a concept though, race is important to the extent that it influences social actions. But social scientists studying race relations "need not themselves believe in the existence of race" since their interest is in "the social and cultural relevance of the *notion* that race exists" (Eriksen, 1996, p. 29).

2.3.2 Culture. Culture is understood as "a social system of shared symbols, meanings, perspectives, and social actions that are mutually negotiated by people in their relationships with others" (Stead, 2004, p. 392). These social systems are highly variable, learned, shared, and passed on generationally by particular social groups (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). The term 'culture' is consequently used to identify the historical nature of social groups and reflects their norms, beliefs, symbols and traditions (Bauman, 1999, cited in Stead, 2004). Culture is not a given though, nor is it passively assumed (Stead, 2004). It is a fluid phenomenon that transforms with increasing contact with other cultures (Stead, 2004). In a rapidly changing environment like the postmodern climate in which we find ourselves now, contact between cultures is increasingly possible through economic trade, migration, the Internet and media. As such, cultures are rapidly changing as people interact and adopt elements of other cultures, absorb new traditions and discard old ones, and adapt to accommodate social developments (Stead, 2004).

2.3.3 Ethnicity. Ethnicity is closely associated with culture and race and is sometimes used interchangeably with both. This is because it is often used in reference to groups characterised by a common nationality, culture or language (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). While ethnicity seems similar to culture, it differs in that it contains commonalities rooted in ancestry (Roosens, 1995). Culture consists of shared practices and beliefs which are learnt, and these are not predetermined or fixed (Smith, 1996). Ethnicity consists of shared history and experience and these are acquired through birth and kinship, and are therefore fixed in that there is historical continuity (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996). The acquisition of fixed characteristics through kinship would suggest that ethnicity as a concept is closer to race. Race, however, suggests genetic inheritance and is deterministic, whereas ethnicity does not automatically determine future characteristics (Fishman, 1996). Ethnicity can therefore be

understood as more flexible than race in that it contains culture, but it is less deterministic because it does not involve genetic determinism (Meehan, 2009).

2.3.4 Religion. Compared to race, culture, and ethnicity, religion as an identity category has largely been overlooked (Peek, 2005). This could be because religious practices are usually thought of as belonging to the private sphere, and religious social actions are considered less visible and identifiable than social actions linked with formal structures in the public sphere (Jeldtoft, 2011). Moreover, religion is often characterised as closely linked to spirituality, where spirituality is seen as individualistic, with an emphasis on personal autonomy and experience (Jeldtoft, 2011). Religion, however, can be perceived as an important meaning system that enables people to make sense of their existence (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). It can have central importance for individuals, and their identity can often be deeply rooted within religion (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). For those observant of religion, their lives would be organised around religious beliefs, values and practices as these offer certainty and meaning to their existence (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Religious beliefs can also come to be expressed through organised and institutionalised frameworks, and adherents to those religions are much more visible (Jeldtoft, 2011). For this reason, it can be argued that religious practice is not confined to the private sphere, but contributes to the construction of people's manifest identities (Jeldtoft, 2011).

Since religion is not consigned to the private sphere, identification with a particular faith enables people to belong to a religious community (Kundnani, 2007). Faith identities are complex, however, operating on different levels of belief, practice and affiliation (Kundnani, 2007). Globalisation and processes of migration have also resulted in religion becoming transnational with membership spanning a multitude of different ethnicities, nationalities and cultures (Kundnani, 2007). As such, religious groups cannot be taken as monolithic with a shared culture or origin.

When looking at race, culture, ethnicity and religion today, it can be argued that these identity categories have been destabilised by postmodernism leading to much more complex

constructions of identity. To comprehend contemporary processes of identity formation, an understanding of postmodernism is therefore useful.

2.4 Theoretical orientation: Postmodernism

‘Postmodernism’ is a key term that is applied to the world today (Sardar, 1998). It can be understood as an ideology that emerged in reaction to modernism (de Vries, Visscher & Gerritsen, 2005). Modernism, as a cultural movement that originated in the late nineteenth century, encouraged the re-examining of every aspect of existence (de Vries et al., 2005). With industrialisation, capitalism, the aggressive advance of colonialism and imperialism, and the First World War forming the backdrop, the modernist movement sought to order the social world through the power of science, rationality and industry (de Vries et al., 2005). Modernism is thus characterised by a belief in science, planning, secularism and progress, and typically involves the subordination of tradition with modern thought (Ahmed, 1992). It is also characterised by symmetry and order, balance and authority, linear progress, and belief in the possibility of a utopian society (Ahmed, 1992).

Modernity’s rationality and its “alienating idea of perpetual, linear progress and elitist notions of culture” resulted in postmodernism - a response against notions of European superiority (Sardar, 1998, p. 6). For Bauman, postmodernism is “modernity conscious of its true nature” (de Vries et al., 2005, p. 7). He conceptualises postmodernity as a reflexive enterprise by intellectuals whereby existing structures are deconstructed making way for characteristics such as pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence (de Vries et al., 2005). Although paradigmatically different, postmodernism should not be taken as simply the opposite of modernism (Hoffman, Stewart, Warren & Meek, 2009). The difference between the two has to do with epistemology, and modernity is even embraced by postmodernism as one of many ways of knowing, rather than the only way (Hoffman et al., 2009).

With modernism it is believed that there is “a knowable absolute truth” that is discernible through science and reason (Hoffman et al., 2009, p. 7). Postmodernism on the other hand rejects all truth claims and is instead committed to relativism (Sardar, 1998). As such what was valid in modernity is taken as obsolete in postmodernity (Sardar, 1998). Modernity was

framed by grand narratives of truth, reason, morality, God, tradition, and history (Sardar, 1998). These notions which were believed to give sense and direction to life are taken as meaningless, artificial constructions that are oppressive by nature (Sardar, 1998).

Doubt is taken as the postmodern condition (Sardar, 1998). All theory, experience, truths and absolutes are doubted (Sardar, 1998). This doubt can be seen as a positive characteristic in that no single culture, civilisation or truth claim is privileged (Sardar, 1998). In fact postmodernism's "defining characteristic" is its concern with variety and multiplicities and as such it places emphasis on the plurality of ethnicities, cultures, genders, truths and argues for more equal representations (Sardar, 1998, p. 10). Postmodernism is therefore taken as standing against the superiority of European culture and civilisation that modernism tried to posit (Sardar, 1998).

As happened with modernity, social processes influenced the development of postmodernism, and globalisation is considered a key social process (Kinnvall, 2004). Globalisation has brought about changes in communication and cultural production and consumption, and this has produced new forms of self-consciousness and reflexivity (Hall, 1996). In an interview with Grossberg (1996), Hall explains that when faced with new ways of being and reading things, the issue of representation is brought up (Grossberg, 1996). With postmodernism, multiplicity leaves no room for an absolute truth, and because there are multiple ways of representing things, we face the collapse of meaning (Grossberg, 1996). Hall contests this view and points out that there is a considerable difference between asserting on the one hand that there is no single, absolute truth – only endless means of signification, and asserting on the other hand that meaning does not exist. He explains that because there is no longer an absolute truth, we have to find meaning without "the solace of closure" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 137). Faced with fragments of truth or multiple codes of meaning, meaning is in fact enriched (Grossberg, 1996). This is because meaning is understood as a subjective act, what Hall terms "the intervention of ideology into language" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 137). As such representation, how we present or interpret phenomena, does not reach an end but rather becomes a more problematic process (Grossberg, 1996). This relationship between language, meaning and representation can be looked at more closely through a social constructionist lens.

2.5 Social constructionism

Social constructionism can be understood as a theory underpinned by the postmodern principles outlined above. Social constructionism relativizes truth claims and emphasises the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Stead, 2004). This does not mean that truth is non-existent. It means that the concern with a final truth or reality is replaced with plural views and understandings which are always understood as contextual and relational (Gemignani & Peña, 2007). Like postmodernism, which says that reality is a simulacrum, social constructionism also sees reality as unknowable except through language (Gemignani & Peña, 2007). The importance of language is thus brought to the fore, and this emphasis on language as constitutive of reality relates to the postmodern area of discourse (Gemignani & Peña, 2007).

Discourse can be understood as the uses of language that, within a specific context, systematically construct the objects of which they speak (Gemignani & Peña, 2007). Drawing on the work of Foucault, social constructionists examine the relationship between social practices and discourses and how these both contribute to the construction of reality (Gemignani & Peña, 2007). Of particular interest to discursive psychologists is how language is used to construct knowledge about phenomena, and how this knowledge, once applied to the social world, has real effects (Hall, 2001). This constructed nature of knowledge means that social constructionists adopt an anti-essentialist approach (Stead, 2004). An anti-essentialist view means that people are not seen as possessing predetermined, intrinsic qualities, instead they are seen as the product of social processes (Stead, 2004). Consequently, social constructionists are wary of categories and dichotomies as these do not reflect reality (Stead, 2004). They are instead seen as political in nature, and used to serve the interests of various power groups (Stead, 2004). Social constructionism is therefore an approach that attempts to deconstruct prevailing views and structures (Stead, 2004).

2.6 Processes of identity formation

Taking the above discussions into consideration, postmodernity is understood as the current context in which identity is formed (Schachter, 2005). It is also understood here as a broad theory of knowledge enlisted to critically examine existing theories which discuss identity

(Schachter, 2005). Social constructionism is the specific postmodern approach used to discuss the discursive nature of identity. Within the field of social psychology ‘identity’ is a keyword around which there is much theorising and research (Howard, 2000). During previous historical periods, when societies were conceived of as stable, identity was to a large extent assigned rather than selected and therefore not such an issue as it is today (Howard, 2000). In the present social climate of rapid change, change is occurring in “the groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in the societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded” (Howard, 2000, p. 367-368). Thus the concept of identity today is imbued with the “need for a sense of who one is” in a constantly evolving context (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Howard, 2000, p. 367).

2.6.1 Identity as fluid. In order to fully explore the whole range of being, social constructionists do not conceptualise identity as a stable, unifying core of the self (Hall, 1996). There is no intrinsic, essential nature, or even a common origin or structure of experience to identities (Hall, 1996; Howard, 2000). Instead, identity is considered a fluid, fractured construction subject to discursive formations and practices (Hall, 1996). Identity is further understood as relational, defined by difference, multiple and fluid (Howard, 2000). Identities are also always in a process of formation, and as such are never taken as complete (Hall, 1996). For social constructionists it is also important to consider the “specific historical and institutional sites” in which these identities are produced (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Consideration is also given to how identities are discursively formed (Hall, 1996). Furthermore, because identities are produced through difference, they are seen as emerging out of “the play of specific modalities of power” (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

2.6.2 Identity as relational.

2.6.2.1 Othering. In order to indicate how identity can be said to be “relationally constructed” (Hansen, 2006, p. 17), three main ideas of the self as relational are drawn on. Firstly, it is thought that individuals construct a sense of self through distinguishing other individuals as different (Sampson, 1993). People are believed to have always split the world up into parts that have “real or imagined distinction from each other” (Said, 1978, p. 39). This process of distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’ is also known as ‘othering’, whereby we construct

our sense of self by recognising what we are not in relation to the 'other' (Hall, 1996; Said, 1978). At the level of the individual, the self thus needs an 'other' to exist. This relational construction can also be extended to groups and leads to in-group/out-group distinctions (Sampson, 1993). Generally, this process of othering is understood to result in unequal self/other relationships.

2.6.2.1.1 Serviceable other/Supplement. Sampson's (1993) concept of the serviceable other provides a useful elaboration of how relational constructions of identity can lead to unequal relationships. A serviceable other is when someone else has to exist in order for an individual to demarcate a sense of self. For example, in order for a man to construct an identity of protector and provider, there has to be serviceable others such as a wife and children (Sampson, 1993). Derrida's supplement operates similarly (Hansen, 2006). Using the example of the dominant male, Derrida explains that women are seen as secondary, but at the same time vital for "societal completion and survival" (Hansen, 2006, p. 21). The serviceable other or supplement is secondary to the privileged subject, but the "latter would not be complete without the former" (Hansen, 2006, p. 21). The 'other' is therefore understood as lesser than, but a necessary requirement for the demarcation and construction of the self.

2.6.2.2 Constitutive outside. Another way in which we construct a sense of self is through identifying a threatening outside other (De Vos, 2003). Following the social constructionist approach used here, our knowledge and interpretation of the world is understood as socially constructed, and limited, by discourse (De Vos, 2003). Laclau and Mouffe (1985) explain that when using language to construct meaning around an object or element we are establishing a discourse. This discourse is articulated through nodal points or master signifiers which partially affix meaning (De Vos, 2003). The fixation of meaning is partial because discourses are socially constructed and therefore not fully sutured (De Vos, 2003). As such, discourses are incomplete and can be penetrated by elements of other discourses or have elements withdrawn (De Vos, 2003). This allows for a permanent renegotiation of meaning (De Vos, 2003). When looking at the social construction of identity then, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) assert that it is an antagonistic process because individuals are never able to attain a closed identity. They emphasise that the "presence of the 'Other'"

prevents [one] from being totally [one's self]" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). To account for this threat to identity from the outside, the Derridean notion of a "constitutive outside" is drawn on (De Vos, 2003, p. 165). Identities are discursively constructed in relation to a threatening outside, but this outside blocks the establishment of a unified inside (De Vos, 2003). The 'constitutive outside' is thus similar to the 'supplement' or 'serviceable other' in that it is necessary for the construction of the self, but it is also threatening because it enables a destabilising and renegotiation of identity (De Vos, 2003).

2.6.2.3 Linking and differentiation. A third way in which we construct our sense of self is through processes of linking and differentiation (Hansen, 2006). Hansen (2006), to indicate how identity can be said to be "relationally constructed" (p. 17), gives the example of a woman juxtaposed to a man and constructed as that which a man is not: maternal, emotional and simple. A woman is accordingly defined through a "positive *process of linking*" to attributes such as maternal, emotional and simple (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). A man would be linked to qualities such as rationality, intelligence, independence and complexity (Hansen, 2006). The female series of links is juxtaposed to the male series of links through a "negative *process of differentiation*" (Hansen, 2006, p. 19). Although the two processes can be analysed separately, when it comes to identity construction both are carried out simultaneously (Hansen, 2006).

2.6.3 Identity as multiple and contextual. While group belonging is relational, it is not exclusivist, meaning that we can belong to multiple groups (Anthias, 2009). For example an individual can be a British citizen, of Indian origin, a Christian, a woman, a vegetarian, and an anthropologist (Sardar, 2005). Multiple identities thus co-exist within a single person, but we draw on these different identities depending on the context (Anthias, 2009; Sardar, 2005). Identity is therefore seen as a process whereby we take up positions depending on "context, meaning, interest, values, goals and projects", and this brings up the concept of identity salience (Anthias, 2009, p. 10). This means that depending on the context, we will give saliency to a particular identity. For instance, at work you might draw on your professional identity, in a restaurant your vegetarian identity, at church your Christian identity, and at home your Indian identity. Each identity is varyingly important to differing contexts (Sardar, 2005).

2.6.4 Identity and agency. Although we are able to assume different identities, social constraints, reason and choice mean that we cannot choose any identity at whim (Sardar, 2005). What it suggests is that we usually have the choice of alternative identities, the choice of multiple identities, and the freedom to give priority to any of the identities we simultaneously hold (Sardar, 2005). That said it is possible that our ‘choice’ or ‘freedom’ of identity is limited by the perceptions and representations of others, and by larger ideological processes and material structures that we interact with (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Since identity is understood as relationally constructed and multiple it is taken as partial, and consideration needs to be given to how social contexts and ideologies inform our “configurations of self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 605). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) sum this up with the following:

Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others’ perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts (p. 606).

The above articulation raises the issue of agency when it comes to identity construction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). From a social constructionist approach, human agency is influenced by historical contexts and structural constraints. Accordingly it is not possible to construct or “author” your own or others’ identities without being influenced by existing social structures (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 306). Of particular interest to social constructionists is how these social structures come to be, and how they in turn function to produce social phenomena. This is believed to be done through language. With regard to identity, Hall’s (1996) discussion of identity as constructed within representation is useful in explaining how identities are discursively constructed for us.

2.6.5 Identity and power. Hall (1996) speaks about the “narrativization of the self” (p. 4), and this refers to how, when we speak about a person, we use language to offer an image or representation of his/her identity. This use of language typically involves a process of representation and consequent interpretation, and as a result, identity is understood as discursively constructed (Hall, 1996). Furthermore, these discursive constructions take place

in “specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Going back to the idea that identity is constructed through difference, Hall (1996) explains that positive constructions are only possible through exclusion, through leaving out something. This means that at the boundary of every identity lies an excess, or something more (Hall, 1996). As such the unity that the term identity elicits is not natural, it is a “constructed form of closure”, requiring an ‘other’ (Hall, 1996, p. 5).

This dependence on an ‘other’ usually leads to the establishment of a “hierarchy between two poles”, for example man/woman, black/white (Hall, 1996, p. 5). This means that the construction of identities can be understood as an act of power, and a strategic and positional process (Hall, 1996, p.5). Identity categories are often organised into dualistic, contrasting divisions such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, black/white, as well as other racial and ethnic divisions (Sampson, 1993). These divisions are not natural categories based on biology or genetics - although these have been drawn on to legitimise social divisions (Sampson, 1993). Rather, these divisions are taken as the effects of discursive processes involving power (Sampson, 1993). For social constructionists the concern is with how these divisions are constructed, and what the consequences of such constructions are (Sampson, 1993). They also consider the power that some groups have to manage the discursive practices by which their own identity is constructed, as well as the power that they have to manage the identity of others (Sampson, 1993). This leads to looking at how dominant groups in society attempt to control how other groups are known, constructing a reality that fits in with an image they desire (Sampson, 1993).

2.7 The orientalised other

Said’s (1978) discussion of Orientalism provides a useful example of how dominant groups can influence the way in which other social groups are known in terms of race, ethnicity and/or culture. His discussion also indicates how identity is relationally constructed, how processes of identity construction are imbued with power differentials, and how they can be contingent upon historical developments. Said (1978) explains that in the late eighteenth century, developing academic sciences and a sizeable body of literature began to take an interest in the alien and unusual, and the Orient or the East, being poorly known, became a

subject of scholarship (Said, 1978). Although the Orient/East encompasses many non-Western nations, primarily those found in Asia, Said's Orientalism "focuses narrowly on conceptions of the Levant and adjacent areas" (Lewis & Wigen, 1997, p. 47). This area is what is known as the Middle East today wherein there is a predominant Muslim culture. The scholarly interest in the East coincided with the period of European expansion, marking a shift of the Orient from "an alien to a colonial space" (Said, 1978; Young, 1990, p. 130).

During colonialism, European nations coming from a position of power and dominance, used their own cultural categories, languages, images, and ideas to describe and represent the nations they came to occupy (Hall, 1997). The basis of orientalist discourse was thus an imaginative and drastic geographical division of the world into two unequal parts – the larger, 'different' Orient, and the familiar Occident or West (Said, 1981). The world was thus structured between the familiar, which was the West or 'us', and the strange, which was the Orient or 'them' (Said, 1978). This reflects the process of 'othering' whereby we form our identity by distinguishing 'us' from 'them' (Said, 1978). The construction of other nations was also done through processes of linking and differentiation. With Orientalism, the West was positively linked to qualities such as rationality, virtuousness, and modernity (Said, 1978). The Orient in contrast was regarded as irrational, depraved, childlike, and backward (Said, 1978). The Orient was thus negatively differentiated from the West.

The Orient can also be understood as constructed as a serviceable other, or supplement. For the West to be perceived as superior, the Orient had to be constructed as backward and inferior. The Orient was also seen as a 'constitutive outside' for the West. Said (1981) interestingly notes that even though the Orient was considered an inferior part of the world, it has always been perceived as greater in size and usually with a greater potential for destructive power than the West. Particularly when looking at Islam, which has always been seen as belonging to the Orient, Said (1981) explains that it is regarded with hostility and fear because it is considered "a formidable competitor" (p. 4) to the West, and also a late-coming challenge to Christianity. The Orient and Islam are therefore regarded as a threatening other which poses a threat to the stability and identity of the West.

2.8 Nation state and identity

The construction of the Orient and Islam in this way can be taken as indicative of how processes of identity construction are inherently strategic and linked to acts of power. If the Orient and Islam are seen as a threat, then Western states have justifiable reasons for colonising, increasing militarisation and invading these states. From a political perspective, the construction of identities can thus be regarded as “a product of and justification for foreign policies” (Hansen, 2006, p. 26). Mouffe (1991) further explains that political life concerns collective, public action and therefore aims to construct a ‘we’ in a context of diversity and conflict. Constructing a ‘we’ requires establishing a border, but a fully inclusive, unified political community can never be realised since there is always a ‘constitutive outside’, or enemy threat, that makes its existence possible (Mouffe, 1991).

Looked at another way, constructing a national ‘we’ means nation-states can be conceived of as “racial states” where the objective is to construct homogeneity (Goldberg, 2002, cited in Lentin, 2003, p. 306). ‘Race’ and ‘state’ are thereby defined in terms of each other, meaning that groups/individuals that are identified as racially different from the dominant group are excluded (Lentin, 2003). This drive towards homogeneity also means that there are attempts to contain the ‘other’ within the nation state, through policies and practices such as immigration laws, multiculturalism and assimilation (Lentin, 2003). According to Lentin (2007), these policies and practices, used to regulate the other, mean that states move from being ‘racial’ to ‘racist’. In a postmodern, increasingly globalised world, constructing a political ‘we’, however, becomes more complicated. Movement and communication across borders means that the idea of using stable identity categories such as race, ethnicity and culture to reflect the nation state is no longer sustainable.

2.9 Hybridity and Diaspora

When looking at identity categories today, the social constructionist concepts of hybridity and diaspora are useful (Howard, 2000). These principles lead to a conceptualisation of identity that link to conditions of postmodernity (Howard, 2000). The concept of hybridity argues against a static, essentialised view of culture and ethnicity (Anthias, 2002). Hybridity is linked to the idea of “cultural syncretism” (Anthias, 2001, p. 621). It refers to the way in

which individuals develop identities that combine characteristics from their native culture with features from the local culture to which they have immigrated, as well as with features from a global culture (Arnett, 2002). This leads to a fragmented, complex hybrid identity (Arnett, 2002). This choosing and mixing of cultural elements does not necessarily mean a shift in identity, or an end to identity politics (Anthias, 2002). It can however lead to the meaning of different cultural elements being transformed when they are combined together (Anthias, 2002). For example, individuals living in a host culture often come to adopt aspects from the immigrants' culture, fusing them into their own identities (Arnett, 2002). These new cultural forms are often visible in music, dress, inter-racial friendship networks and social practices, but the original meaning has often transformed.

Diaspora is another principle related to geography and identity (Howard, 2000). Howard (2000) explains that the principle of diaspora considers the political struggles to define identity in a historical context of displacement. Previously the term was used in reference to forced migration or displacement, for example Africans during the slave trade, or the Jewish dispersion (Akyeampong, 2000). Today the term encompasses alien residents, expellees, political refugees, expatriates, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities, and it refers to movement from an ancestral land to settlement in a new land (Akyeampong, 2000; Palmer, 2000). Diasporic communities are imagined, symbolic communities that are characterised by an emotional attachment to their original homeland and are conscious of their oppression or alienation in their new country of residence (Palmer, 2000). Usually these communities also have a sense of ethnic or religious identity that surpasses geographic borders, sharing broad cultural similarities (Palmer, 2000).

2.10 Translocational positionality

For Anthias (2002), concepts like hybridity and diaspora do not fully capture aspects of the present world. She proposes that instead of looking at identity and belonging in terms of groups or divisions, we should rather look at social location. As the concept of diaspora indicates, if dislocated at the level of the nation, an individual will find that he/she still exists within the boundaries of gender, ethnicity or religion (Anthias, 2002). For example if a Muslim woman moves from Pakistan to France she will remain female, South Asian, and

Muslim. What changes are her location and her experience of each identity. She might experience more freedom as a female, but less acceptance as a Muslim, whereas in Pakistan the reverse would have been true. As such, the idea of 'location' emphasises the importance of context and "the situated nature of [identity] claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales" (Anthias, 2009, p. 12). Social locations can therefore be thought of as social spaces that are defined by both boundaries and hierarchies (Anthias, 2009). We are then forced to think about boundaries and hierarchies in relation to each other, and also the contradictions we might encounter through our differential location within these boundaries and hierarchies (Anthias, 2009).

Anthias (2009) uses the term 'translocational positionality' to explain how different locations relate to identity categories such as gender, ethnicity and race, and how the interplay between location and identity can have contradictory effects. 'Positionality' is used in reference to social position (outcome) and social positioning (process) (Anthias, 2009). This means that positionality is at the intersection of structure (social position) and agency (social positioning) (Anthias, 2009). 'Location' refers to context and the "situated nature of claims and attributions" surrounding identity (Anthias, 2009, p. 12). And the term 'translocational' is used in reference to the intersection of identity categories within a range of social boundaries and hierarchies.

Translocational positionality is therefore a term that enables us to think of our identities as relational to our location (Anthias, 2009). We would therefore consider our identity in terms of context and the categorical organisation of boundaries and hierarchies (Anthias, 2009). Such an approach shows how the privileging of any identity category is a social process and not based on any essential, possessive characteristics (Anthias, 2009). To think of identity categories as based on essential characteristics can result in prejudice and social inequalities.

2.11 Racial prejudice/Racism and Cultural essentialism

Sampson (1999), drawing from the work of Allport (1954), defines prejudice as "an unjustified, usually negative attitude directed towards others because of their social category or group membership" (p. 4). This prejudice is often based on difference (Sampson, 1999).

Racial prejudice occurs when prejudice is directed toward people because of their racial or ethnic categories (Verkuyten, 2003). These racial or ethnic categories are formed based on essential properties that members are deemed to have. These categories are taken as natural and fixed, and consequently members of those categories are judged to be a certain way (Verkuyten, 2003). Categorising people into groups based on the idea of difference does not necessarily create a hierarchy of groups (Anthias, 1990). Rather, it is the culturally constructed ideas and beliefs about these differences that lead to the hierarchy of groups (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 20). We can therefore speak about racial prejudice when the concept of race is accompanied by “discourses and practices of inferiorisation and subordination” of others (Anthias, 1990, p. 22).

Mainstream social psychological research has traditionally assumed racial prejudice to be part of a natural human cognitive tendency to categorise people into groups (Ahmed, Nicolson & Spencer, 2000). Thus stereotyping was seen as a consequence of people’s attempt to cope and deal effectively with incoming information (Ahmed et al., 2000). This approach can be understood as providing an excuse for racism, because by attributing it to cognitive processes, it is seen as inevitable and anyone can be racist (Ahmed et al., 2000). Ahmed et al. (2000) suggest that such an approach only reinforces and perpetuates unequal social relations.

Categorising groups is now seen by discursive psychologists as a social practice; as something people do, rather than as an individual perceptual process (Verkuyten, 2003). This marks a shift in focus from cognition and perception to action and interaction (Verkuyten, 2003). Using discursive psychology, ‘race’ is taken as a rhetorical construction (Billig, 1985) and racial prejudice is studied in terms of how people use various linguistic devices and specific constructions to essentialise and legitimate patterns of social power and racial dominance (Verkuyten, 2003).

‘Race’ as a rhetorical construction allows for an understanding of how racism has taken on a different form, that of “cultural essentialism” (Verkuyten, 2003, p. 376). Where previously racist discourses were based on biological traits, the focus today has shifted to cultural differences (Verkuyten, 2003). Culture is presumed to be distinct to different racial/ethnic groupings, and as such it is possible to construct essentialist beliefs about particular cultural

groupings (Verkuyten, 2003). In addition, it can be argued that the idea of genetic lineage, once encoded as 'race', has now been recoded as primordial ethnicity and invariant cultural difference, and this gives culture an immutable, natural character enabling it to be used as a homologue for race (Malik, 1996, cited in Richardson, 2004). Cultural essentialism is thus taken as a "new racism" as cultural groups are believed to have a distinct underlying essence which is used to construct difference and legitimise patterns of social dominance (Verkuyten, 2003, p. 379).

This new racism results in the limitation of rights based on the idea that a cultural group's way of life is reprehensible and does not fit within a particular society (Dunn, Klocker & Salabay, 2007). Old types of racism were premised on the idea of racial supremacy and separatism, while new racisms function to reinforce cultural privilege (Dunn et al., 2007). Although distinctions are drawn between 'old' and 'new' racisms, Dunn et al. (2007) find that there are several similarities between the two. For one, new forms of racism also result in structures of inferiority and differentiation or exclusion. Another similarity is the dependence on generalisations and stereotypes. New racisms also find continuity in drawing on the physical features of targets, be they phenotypical, clothing, or place of residence. Dunn et al. (2007), citing Hopkins (2004), give the example of young Muslims in Scotland who experienced marginalisation either because of the way they dressed, or through having a beard, or through skin colour.

2.11.1 Religion as a social signifier. In addition to differences constructed along cultural lines, there is now an obscuring between faith and race/ethnicity, so that religious belonging has also become a symbol of racial/ethnic difference (Abbas, 2007; Kundnani, 2007). Faith, like race/ethnicity, is largely considered to be set at birth, and involves belonging to a community, often with distinctive dress codes and practices, which makes it observable from appearance (Kundnani, 2007). Kundnani (2007) finds European anti-Semitism illustrative of the racialization of religious groups. In twentieth-century Europe despite Jewish integration into society they were still regarded as a threat to a unified national identity because they affiliated with a trans-national religious identity (Kundnani, 2007). Their Jewish identity was taken as a marker of racial difference (Kundnani, 2007). Today a similar racialization of Muslims is taking place. Kundnani (2007) explains how an Islamic

religious identity is now divided from a modern British culture, and this dividing of communities into fixed identities is a hallmark of the process of racism. He gives the example of people living in Britain who are of Pakistani ethnicity. Where once they would have been abused as 'Pakis', they are now also abused as 'Muslims'. Thus race/ethnicity is often conflated with religious identity. Fekete (2004) suggests that such prejudice directed towards religious groups today can be seen as "xeno-racism" (p. 4). It is 'xeno-' in that it is a form of xenophobia directed against foreigners irrespective of colour, and racism in substance in that it still contains the same features of demonisation and exclusion that the old types of racism did (Fekete, 2004).

2.12 Modern racism

The constructed nature of racism is also evident when considering how racism manifests itself today. In the past, blatant racism was based on the idea of racial superiority and opposition to racial equality (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999). During systems of apartheid and other legal forms of segregation, power differences and inequalities were clearly defined and as such resistance and opposition was directed toward an easily identified system (van Dijk, 1992). In contemporary, pluralist societies there are laws and widespread norms against blatant racism, prejudice and forms of discrimination (van Dijk, 1992). Most Western countries therefore share the belief that racism is no longer a structural characteristic of the society and institutional or systemic racism is denied (van Dijk, 1992). When racial prejudice occurs, it is usually attributed and punished at the level of the individual, or at the very least met with disdain and public reproach (Richardson, 2004; van Dijk, 1992). Racism today is thus less blatant and more subtle than it used to be (Ahmed et al., 2000). It is also rarely characterised as 'racism', but is instead conceptualised as xenophobia and often as legitimate cultural self-defence (van Dijk, 1992).

Van Dijk (1992) believes this denial of racism to be part of a strategy of positive self-presentation. The in-group is constructed as tolerant and this can be seen as a way of subtly expressing negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 1992). If tolerance is promoted, it makes it more difficult for minority groups to credibly challenge inequalities (van Dijk, 1992). The denial of racism, however, only serves to reproduce racism. Van Dijk (1992) explains how in

order to resist racism, there would need to be recognition of the problem, public attention and media coverage. If politicians and the media refuse to acknowledge the issue, then there will be no public debate, no change in opinion, and no change to the system of social inequality (van Dijk, 1992). Denial of racism is thus seen as a management strategy (van Dijk, 1992).

2.13 Racism as discourse

The new forms of racism are subtle because of their discursive nature (van Dijk, 2000). Where old forms of racism were openly violent and involved forceful segregation, racism today is expressed and enacted through text and talk (van Dijk, 2000). Appearing as mere talk, racism seems less threatening, but may really be just as powerful at marginalising minorities (van Dijk, 2000). Hall (1990) similarly asserts that racism appearing in this way is much more insidious, especially since it may even be invisible to those who are communicating it. As mentioned, when racist ideologies are normalised and taken as nonracist, their contestation by minority groups is more difficult. But while the form of racism may be discursive, it has real effects or consequences for those social groups subjected to racial prejudice (van Dijk, 2000).

Discourses govern the way in which a topic can be meaningfully spoken about (Hall, 1997). They also influence the way in which ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the bearing of others (Hall, 1997). Foucault argued that a discourse never consists of a single statement, text, action or source (Hall, 1997). Rather, the same discourse will appear across a multitude of texts, and at a number of institutional sites within a society (Hall, 1997). Said's theory of Orientalism for example looks at how the West constructed the Orient using a complex set of representations, where those writing about it used a particular narrative voice, structure, and a selection of themes, images and motifs – all of which added up to provide a deliberate way of “addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing or speaking in its behalf” (Said, 1978, p. 20).

Discourses such as Orientalism can become established to the extent that texts no longer need to construct detailed representations of identity as when it first emerged (Hansen, 2006). For Said (1988) this discourse became established to the extent that terrorism is now permanently

and subliminally associated with the Orient and Islam. For many, Islam brings up images of “bearded clerics and mad suicidal bombers, of unrelenting Iranian mullahs, fanatical fundamentalists, and kidnappers, remorseless turbaned crowds who chant hatred of the US, ‘the great devil’, and all its ways” (Said, 1988, p. 2). Even in comic strips, films, cartoons and other media the iconography of Islam is the same: Muslims are portrayed as oil suppliers, terrorists and often violent. They are also almost never portrayed in a sympathetic light (Said, 1981). Prejudice toward Muslims is thus reflected in the discursive way that they are essentialised or reduced to oil suppliers or potential terrorists and there is no attempt to capture the detail or density of the Muslim world (Said, 1981).

2.14 The media’s legitimization of Western hegemony/facilitation of Orientalism

Said’s theory of Orientalism is therefore important to our understanding of the discursive conditions of knowledge (Young, 1990). For Richardson (2004), knowledge of Orientalist scholarship, past and present, is also critical to an understanding of the context and significance of present-day representations of Muslims across a wide range of social/political discourses, including mass communicated media and academic research. This is because Orientalism is seen as “retentive and extensive, old and familiar” and easily revised to fit present circumstances (Sardar, 1999, p. 114). There is coherence because the stereotypes used are interrelated, and since the Orient is taken as monolithic, the lack of specificity allows dominant ideas about one Orient to be applied to another (Sardar, 1999). With postmodernism the Orient has also acquired a global presence; it is located everywhere and can be subjected to Orientalisation (Sardar, 1999). This accounts for how Muslim groups found within the West itself are Orientalised. Oriental stereotypes are also easily reinforced through postmodern means of communication. Television, films and other media resources distribute information through increasingly standardised moulds (Said, 1978).

The media is considered a critical space when it comes to the representation of identity (Pietikäinen, 2003). This is because identity formation partly consists of the ways in which we are represented (Hall, 1997). Additionally, what is known about ‘others’ does not often originate from personal experience or direct contact (van Dijk, 1992). It is news representations which contribute to how people regard their own identities and those of

others, and how people view the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Pietikäinen, 2003). As such, van Dijk (2000) explains that media discourses are often “the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies” (p. 36). The media provide people with a representation of events that occur beyond their immediate social experience (Abbas, 2001). The influence of media institutions in modern information societies is thus paramount (van Dijk, 2000). News media is considered an elite institution and occupies a powerful position in society in the way it is able to include or exclude social content (Abbas, 2001). It is able to shape information and can both limit and enable the representations of identities (Pietikäinen, 2003).

2.15 Journalistic practices

Pietikäinen (2003) consequently emphasises that news is made and not merely reported. It has a constructed quality to it. News is seen as the end-product of a complex process involving a systematic sorting and selecting of events (Abbas, 2001). It is through these practices of mainstream journalism that the news media has been shown to be blameworthy of creating and maintaining racist sentiment and prejudice toward minority groups (Richardson, 2004). When faced with a large flow of information about events occurring in the world, in order to compile comprehensible reports, journalists need to have clear-cut routines so that they can meet deadlines and work with available resources (Pietikäinen, 2003). Added to that, journalists need to maximise savings in terms of costs, time, and effort, and this further requires a streamlining of journalistic practice (Pietikäinen, 2003). What this results in then is a heavy dependence on ready-made material. Journalists will often use stories that have already been covered in other news outlets, press releases and agency reports (Pietikäinen, 2003). This reliance on ready-made material means that those groups or individuals who are able to provide information requiring little groundwork or in-house editing will have a greater chance of making it into the news than others (Allan, 1999, cited in Pietikäinen, 2003). These individuals or groups also usually have good public relation services managing information for them. Ethnic minorities are seldom able to produce their own public relation services and this means that for journalists, obtaining minority voices in the news about ethnic issues would require more time and effort (Pietikäinen, 2003). This characteristic of news making brings up the issue of who has access to the news and how this shapes news discourses.

2.15.1 Minority access to media. Van Dijk (1996) explains that dominant groups are able to maintain hegemony because they have preferential access to the media. This access depends on economic and political structures however (Pietikäinen, 2003), and it is found that the dissemination of information by the media is often done in “joint production” with other elites such as politicians, professionals and academics. What this results in then is an “elite ideological dominance” (Richardson, 2007, p. 36). This ideological dominance is further sustained by media capital and control over the production and distribution of ideas resting in the hands of a few (Abbas, 2001). In contrast, minority groups are disadvantaged by their limited social and economic power, and lack customary types of organised media access such as press conferences, press releases and public relation departments (Fedler, 1973, cited in van Dijk, 1996) which would otherwise allow them to bring attention to issues that are important to them (Pietikäinen, 2003). This unequal access to the media results in differential access to the structure and/or content of news reports (van Dijk, 1996).

2.15.2 Representing difference. When looking at what social content is included in the news, research has shown that events related to the economy, government politics, foreign affairs, and crime are deemed newsworthy (Pietikäinen, 2003). When reporting on ethnic minorities then, this often translates into topics such as the cost of immigration policies, legislation, unemployment, and refugee aid (Pietikäinen, 2003). Press accounts will often highlight the problems that minorities have such as unemployment, crime, violence and discrimination (van Dijk, 1992). Positive topics routinely used in the coverage of white people are not extended towards minorities (van Dijk, 1992). This trend of positive in-group and negative out-group depictions is captured by van Dijk’s (1998) theoretical concept called the “ideological square” (p. 148). The ideological square refers to binary oppositions that are constructed in discourse through the use of lexical choice and other linguistic features (van Dijk, 1998).

Hall’s (1997) discussion of representing difference expands on this. He explains that we use binary oppositions to capture difference, and difference is important because it is how we make meaning. For example we know what black means because we can contrast it to white. It is the ‘difference’ between ‘black’ and ‘white’ that signifies, or carries meaning. Through binary oppositions we are thus able to illustrate the diversity of the world. Hall (1997) adds

though that binary oppositions present a crude, over-simplified and reductionist way of expressing difference. Hall (1997), citing Derrida (1974), further argues that binary oppositions are seldom neutral. There is usually a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition with one end being more dominant (Hall, 1997). In discussing people who are different or 'other' we often use binary forms of representation. This is evident in the use of "sharply opposed, polarised, binary extremes [such as] good/bad civilised/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/compelling because strange and exotic" (Hall, 1997, p. 229).

2.16 Drawing on available discourses

This use of language to construct difference means that dominant ideologies are easily perpetuated through discursive practices. It is not implied, however, that newspapers deliberately produce prejudiced discourses. Rather they draw on available cultural discourses, and reproduce them (Willig, 2008). Indeed Foucaudian discourse analysts look at the availability of discursive resources within a culture, what Willig (2008) likens to a "discursive economy" (p. 112). Therefore newspaper journalists will, to some extent, draw on existing available discourses for their definition of minority group situations (Abbas, 2001). Moreover negative representations of Islam and Muslims in Britain today are not a recent occurrence, but are instead a "variant of existing historical discourses" (Abbas, 2001, p. 249) as determined by the discussion of Orientalism. Discourses related to Islam and Muslims have thus formed over centuries of contact and are still drawn on today (Abbas, 2001).

2.17 Islamophobia

The xenophobia directed towards Muslims and/or Islam today is referred to 'Islamophobia' (Abbas, 2001). Islamophobia refers to a dread or hatred of Islam, and thus a fear or dislike of Muslims (Sheridan, 2006). While the term has been coined recently, the idea has had a long established history with representations of Muslims being constructed over centuries of contact (Abbas, 2001). As evidenced by Orientalism, negative representations of Muslims as barbaric, violent, intolerant, ignorant and backward are not new, and Islamophobia in present times depends on this history to fill the substance of its stereotypes today (Abbas, 2001). At the same time though, the fear of Muslims today has "its own contemporary idiosyncratic

features” related to recent historic processes (Abbas, 2001, p. 249). Recent historic events such as the Gulf War, the Satanic Verses controversy, and terrorist attacks in New York, London and Madrid have attracted press and media attention toward Muslims and Islam (Abbas, 2001). These events, while condemned by large sections of Islamic communities worldwide, have impacted on perceptions of Muslims in the West (Matthes, 2011). Matthes (2011) suggests that these incidents have reactivated a particular Western image of Islam as a dangerous ‘other’ and a threat to Western civilisation. The narratives surrounding these events have resulted in Islamophobia.

According to the Runnymede Trust seven main features of Islamophobia can be identified (Abbas, 2001): Muslim cultures are taken as monolithic; Islamic cultures are significantly different to other cultures; Islam is relentlessly threatening; Islamic faith is used for political or military advantage; Muslim criticism of Western cultures and societies is rejected; Fear of Islam is associated with racist hostility toward immigration; Islamophobia is taken as natural and unproblematic.

While not discounting the unfair or incorrect nature of Islamophobia, Halliday (1999) finds the term ‘Islamophobia’ inaccurate. Halliday (1999) argues that in the past, during the Crusades for example, Islam as a religion was taken as the enemy. Today though, the attack is not against Islam as a faith but against Muslims as a people, or against states such as Iraq. Moreover, “what is presented as the Islamic critique of the West has little or nothing to do with religion” (Halliday, 1999, p. 899). The critique is often a valid, secular, nationalist protest. Halliday (1999) provides examples such as support for Palestine, condemnation of cultural imperialism, and protests at the double standards on human rights – none of which are necessarily religious in content or exclusive to the Muslim world. It has less to do with belief and more to do with political power. Halliday (1999) suggests that it would be more accurate to speak of ‘anti-Muslimism’ rather than ‘Islamophobia’.

Richardson (2004) disagrees with Halliday, and argues that many Muslims, particularly women, face more discrimination when they are noticeably a Muslim than when they are not. He argues that following September 11, 2001, people were increasingly attacked due to their perceived religiosity. This was evident from reports by Sikhs who reported attacks because

they were mistakenly identified as Muslim. Furthermore, it is not just Muslims who are attacked for their faith, but the religion itself is condemned. Saleh (2009) explains that in the media Islam is associated with brutality and backwardness, and is presented as an antagonistic religion at odds with the West. Islam's theocratic system is presented as incompatible with the West's secular democratic political system (Saleh, 2009). As such, Islam is perceived as threatening to free thought, civil liberties, world peace and stability (Saleh, 2009). This hostile, threatening image of Islam supports the accuracy of the term 'Islamophobia'. I will therefore be using 'Islamophobia' in reference to the prejudice/xenophobia directed at Muslims today.

2.18 Islamophobia in the media

Existing research shows that Islamophobia is implicit in media discourses. Prevalent themes in the media are the association of Muslims with terrorism, and religious and cultural difference (Mythen, Walklate & Khan, 2009).

2.18.1 Terrorism/extremism. Terrorism can be defined as “a premeditated use or threat of use of violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims” (Enders & Sander, 2005, p. 260). Enders and Sander (2005) explain that terrorism can be domestic or transnational in nature. Domestic terrorism is confined within a host country, where the perpetrators and targets are homegrown, and terrorist incidents have consequences for the host country alone. Transnational terrorism is when a terrorist incident in one country involves victims, targets, institutions or citizens of another country. The 9/11 hijackings in America were a transnational terrorist event because “the incidents were planned abroad, the terrorists came from outside the United States, support came from abroad, victims were from more than eighty countries, and the incidents had economic and security implications worldwide” (Enders & Sander, 2005, p. 261).

When it came to documenting the terror attacks of 9/11, media globalisation played a pivotal role. The attacks were claimed to be the most documented in history, resulting in reams of discourses, reflections and writings (Kellner, 2004). Of particular interest to this study is the

‘war on terror’ discourse advocated by the Bush doctrine, and perpetrated by the media shortly after. Declaring, “You’re either with us, or against us”, Bush’s war on terror resulted in a Manichean binary between good and evil, us and them, civilisation and barbarism (Kellner, 2004). This binary discourse of good versus evil generated an assumption that ‘we’ are good and the ‘Other’ is evil (Kellner, 2004). The problem with this discourse of good versus evil is that it is totalising, absolutist and reductive (Kellner, 2004). ‘We’ are associated with good, and ‘they’ are associated with all that is negative (Kellner, 2004). This constitution of the ‘other’ using totalising associations with negative traits legitimates any action that is taken under the guise of attacking evil (Kellner, 2004). Notably, terrorists themselves use a similar simplistic binary discourse to project evil onto the other and legitimate their acts of terrorism. The events of 9/11 appeared to espouse this binary thinking leading to the complete dehumanising of the ‘enemy’, evident in the killing of innocent citizens too (Kellner, 2004).

2.18.2 Racialising the terrorist ‘Other.’ When looking more closely at the construction of the terrorist/evil ‘Other’, however, the construction is amorphous, without a specific country or military target (Kellner, 2004). The terrorist is instead seen as part of an invisible network supported by multiple groups and states (Kellner, 2004). Such a conceptualisation allows the supporter of good to attack any country or group that supports terrorism, thus providing a foundation for a doctrine of pre-emptive strikes (Kellner, 2004). The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are an example of this doctrine. Although Kellner (2004) states that the terrorist other was amorphous, without belonging to a specific country, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq indicate that the contemporary terrorist enemy is explicitly associated with a racialised other (Featherstone, Holohan & Poole, 2010). The racialised other being Muslims and/or Islam. Moreover, Islam is seen as belonging to the East, and as such ‘Islamic terrorism’ is often discussed within specific Eastern cultural contexts. While it has been made clear that the ‘war on terror’ is not a war on Islam, Poole (2002) explains that the meanings and values attached to Islam in the past, i.e. Orientalism, are still in operation. Moreover, this is compounded by the terrorists themselves claiming ‘Islamic’ motivations behind their actions (Poole, 2002). As such, even where distinctions are made between ‘terrorists’ and ‘Muslims’, reference is still made to ‘Islamic and Muslim terrorists’ or ‘Islamists’ where the terrorists are seen as a product of a fanatical strain of Islam (Poole,

2002). The result of this is that the associated negative behaviour of terrorism is seen as originating out of something inherent in the religion of Islam (Poole, 2002).

Citing Li (2007), Eid and Karim (2011) suggest that following the fear produced by the 9/11 attacks, the use of race, and the attribution of negative connotations to race by politicians and the media, becomes socially acceptable as long as this takes place within a context of preventing public danger. When looking at media coverage of Muslims and Islam, there is common use of stereotypes and discriminatory rhetoric (Eid & Karim, 2011). The association between Islam and terrorism has become accepted to the extent that the terms ‘Muslim’ and ‘terrorist’ are almost taken as synonymous (Coleman & Ross, 2010; Eid & Karim, 2011). Themes of violence and militancy are often associated with Muslims, and the teachings of Islam are often linked to terrorism, destruction and conflict (Eid & Karim, 2011).

2.18.2.1 The terrorist ‘other’ in Britain. In Britain, this construction of terrorists as a foreign racial/ethnic other has become difficult to reconcile (Featherstone et al., 2010). As discussed earlier, the construction of identity is historically and socially situated, and an on-going, fluid process. The construction of Muslim terrorists in the British media reflects this. Following the 7/7 terror attacks, it became evident that terrorists were not always a foreign other, in this case they were British born (Featherstone et al., 2010). Within the British national context, in order to maintain good social relations and an idea of inclusion, constructions of Muslims have been more diverse (Poole, 2002). Featherstone et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative analysis of 61 newspaper articles from *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and their sister Sunday newspapers to look at the reporting of Islam after 7/7. Their study indicated that after 7/7, the construction of Muslims was a complex process, and necessitated the use of alternative strategies for ‘othering’ (Featherstone et al., 2010).

Featherstone et al. (2010) found that discourses on terror often include particular “storybook” (p. 176) characterisations. There are usually the respectable Muslim, friends and family of the accused, the misguided loner (the accused) and the evil mentor. The construction of the ‘evil mentor’ follows the Orientalist discourse of the foreign extremist other. This characterisation is straightforward and one-dimensional, where practitioners of the Islamic faith are

implicated as central sources of extremist ideologies. When it comes to the ‘central actor’ (the accused) though, the complex construction of the ‘other’ becomes evident. The central actor is constructed using inclusive characteristics such as British citizenship and/or middle class attributes. This character is also usually developed along a narrative of a previously ordinary, non-practising individual who lost direction and was misguided by a radical ideology. The inclusion of positive middle class attributes such as education and a respectable family background, and the framing of the central actor as a misguided loner function to separate the individual from the collective, wider Muslim community which is depicted as expressing despair at the path chosen by the individual.

From these constructions, Featherstone et al. (2010) identified a discursive struggle in the negotiation between the British-born Islamist and the foreign other. The central actor is often discussed in terms of an individual pathology. He/she is commonly described as ‘fixated’, ‘obsessed’, and a ‘loner’, with identity issues, lack of direction and personal failings. This individual is always linked back to a wider terror network though, which legitimises the political discourse on the war on terror. As a result, the mosques and their foreign clerics are constructed as importing a foreign extremist ideology. And this ideology is represented as an irrational religious one, rather than political. Presenting it as a religious ideology suggests that any Muslim could be radicalised. Featherstone et al. (2010) thus identify two main ideas within the discourse on terror: individual pathology and outside influence. The effect of these two ideas is that accusations of racism can be dismissed and the Muslim community is placated through “a discourse of individualism, irrationality and psychosis” (p. 177).

2.18.3 Religious/cultural difference. Oftentimes, the images constructed by the media form part of a broader tradition of depicting Islam as something different or ‘other’ (Christensen, 2006). Here Muslims’ religious and cultural practices are drawn on, usually to show how Islamic values are incompatible with Western values. These constructions are often evident in discussions around integration and/or assimilation. Integration and assimilation debates can be reduced to a simple dichotomy between the superiority of British values and the alien threat of Muslim values (Kundnani, 2007). Acceptance into British society becomes conditional upon the acceptance of British values (Kundnani, 2007). This sort of thinking has resulted in a hierarchical ranking of communities according to their

distance from British norms of civility (Kundnani, 2007). For example, British values with regard to women are considered ‘modern’ whereas Muslim values are backward – Islam is often singled out for its negative treatment of women (Kundnani, 2007). The veil is seen as a symbol of women’s oppression, and is a reflection of this dichotomy – British society is naturally liberal and Muslims naturally sexist. Those arguing for integration assume that there is a simple link between Islam and the oppression of women, overlooking the complexities of culture, underdevelopment and migration (Kundnani, 2007).

This overlooking of the complexities of culture and context, leads Saleh (2009) to note that the traditional polarisation of Islam and the West is odd. He observes that it is difficult to identify what exactly is being compared, and questions whether “it is possible to handle adherents to Islam and residents of the ‘West’, with all their varying cultural, political, sectarian, and ideological differences, as two monoliths?” (p. 206).

A consequence of the media’s over-simplified and generalised treatment of Islam and Muslims (Abbas, 2001), has been the racialization of Muslim-ness (Ahmad & Evergeti, 2010). Muslim communities which are marked by differences in regional background, ethnicity and culture are often presented as a homogenous mass, and seen as similar to an ethnic or racial group (Ahmad & Evergeti, 2010). They are also assumed to possess inherent qualities which allows for them to be positioned as oppositional and threatening to the West (Ahmad & Evergeti, 2010). This racialization can be seen as a response to the supposed threat that cultural diversity poses to national cohesion and security (Kundnani, 2007). In terms of identity, constructing a ‘we’ in a context of cultural diversity requires the demarcation of a constitutive outside (Mouffe, 1991). As such, attention is drawn to ‘differences’ between British-ness and Muslim-ness. Kundnani (2007) adds that it has become necessary to promote a national story of British-ness to unify the nation around a set of core values. Minorities are thus expected to assimilate, and this integrationist discourse draws on a “wider anti-Muslim political culture that is associated with the ‘war on terror’” (Kundnani, 2007, p. 24). In this way the focus is shifted away from institutional racism, and seen as an attempt to preserve British identity.

Richardson (2001) analysed the representation of Muslims and Islam in British broadsheet newspapers over a four month period (October 1997 – January 1998). From the 2540 articles collected, Richardson (2001) looked at a sample of 276 ‘domestic’ articles which enabled a focused analysis of British Islam and/or British Muslims. He used quantitative methods to empirically analyse the form and frequency of the marginalisation of British Muslim communities in broadsheet newspapers. He also used qualitative methods to more specifically analyse journalistic discourses that lead from marginalisation to more explicit exclusion strategies. Richardson (2001) identified a rejectionist discourse showing that British Muslims are mostly excluded from British broadsheet coverage, but where they are mentioned they are largely included in negative contexts. Moreover, he found that the opinions of British Muslims are either excluded, or quoted so that they contrast with the position on British opinion. Thus, Richardson (2001) found that coverage of British Muslims is presented from a perspective whereby ‘white’ superiority is presupposed, excluding the voice of ‘others’.

Richardson (2001) however, finds it inadequate to label such representations as racist, essentialising, simplifying or false because it overlooks the practical function of the rejectionist discourse he identified. He argues that the rejectionist discourse should rather be viewed as a means of spatial management. This is because the increasingly visible presence of British Muslim communities poses a disruption to the “imagined privileged relations between ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ [of the ‘white’ majority] and the national space conceived as its own” (Hage, 1998, cited in Richardson, 2001, p. 239).

This study agrees with Richardson (2001) in suggesting that the representation of Muslims is a management strategy to exclude ‘others’. Unlike Richardson (2001) though, media representations are taken as racist, oversimplified and essentialising. Moreover, this study’s concern with a postmodern, increasingly borderless world means the distinction between domestic and international articles is not made. It is assumed that constructions of ‘international’ Muslims, often as a ‘constitutive outside’ or ‘serviceable other’ colour the perceptions that people have of Muslims living in Britain, particularly because Muslims are seen as immigrants coming from outside. To understand better how media representations are racist, oversimplified and essentialist, it is useful to look more closely at the racialisation of Muslims.

2.19 Visibility/racialisation of Muslim communities in Britain

2.19.1 Spatial segregation. Understanding the process by which the racialization of Muslims takes place is useful, particularly because it indicates how religion has come to stand in for race (Williamson & Khiabany, 2010). When certain areas/spaces are associated with particular ethnic groups, those spaces are said to be racialised. In countries like Britain, ethnic spaces are often discernible by a marked absence of white people in those areas. This leads to a differentiation between ethnic spaces and white spaces. This differentiation is often negative in that ethnic spaces are depicted as synonymous with high levels of social deprivation, poverty, drugs and crime (Phillips, 2006). In Britain, media coverage of the urban disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001 was flooded with discourses of racialised segregation, rekindling an interest in racialised divisions (Phillips, 2006). This interest was directed toward British Muslims, especially those of South Asian origin, who were constructed as self-segregating. In response to these media/public discourses, Phillips (2006) looked closely at the racialised lives of South Asian Muslims in Britain. This was done using spatial analyses, household interview data from a stratified sample of 117 Muslim households in Bradford, qualitative in-depth interviews, and 13 focus groups.

Phillips (2006) identified an isolationist discourse where minority ethnic segregation is depicted as problematic. British Muslims are depicted as foreign, inward-looking, “self-segregating” minorities (Phillips, 2006, p. 37). Reasons for minority ethnic segregation are complex and rooted in social, economic, political and cultural factors. The term ‘self-segregation’ however, in a context of racialised political and media discourses, suggests that ethnic minorities choose to withdraw from active participation in British society, and this sustains cultural differences (Phillips, 2006). This places the responsibility for community tensions on minorities.

Phillips (2006) also found that in British cities like Bradford, Muslim spaces are signified by mosques and Islamic institutions which some take as “symbols of insularity and possible sites of insurrection, prompting questions about minority ethnic citizenship, national identity and belonging” (Phillips, 2006, p. 27). Phillips (2006) found that even though British Muslims value residential clustering for reasons such as culture, tradition, familiarity, identity and security, they did not indicate a desire for separation. Rather, their separation mostly reflects

bounded choices where they are constrained by structural disadvantages, inequalities in the housing market, racial prejudice and harassment. Phillips (2006) suggests that these bounded choices, and the racialization of space in Bradford, reflect white cultural hegemony. She points out that the parallel problematic status of white segregation passes without comment. In multiracial Bradford, primarily white suburbs are taken as normal and unproblematic. “The dominance, power, and authority of whiteness as a discourse rely on its taken-for-granted nature and invisibility” (Phillips, 2006, p. 29). This reflects a culturally hegemonic status where white spaces become normal, centralised spaces against which other spaces are measured as deviant or marginal (Phillips, 2006).

2.19.2 Physical signifiers of difference. Another way in which Muslims are racialised is by drawing on physical characteristics to indicate difference (Dunn et al., 2007). Instead of focusing on physical characteristics like skin colour though, contemporary constructions of ‘race’ also draw on physical signifiers such as clothing. When looking at Muslims, the veil is one item of clothing that has become an important symbol of otherness (Williamson & Khiabany, 2010). Far from being depicted solely as part of a religious and cultural dress code for women though, the veil has had connotations imposed on it by the media and dominant Western culture (El Hamel, 2002). For the West, the veil often symbolises inferiority, fundamentalism, oppression, passivity, and backwardness (El Hamel, 2002). It is also constructed as a threat to Western values, or a symbol of defiance whereby Muslim women refuse to adopt Western culture (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008). To explain how the veil has been inscribed with many different meanings, Foucault’s concepts of archaeology and genealogy are useful.

2.19.2.1 *Archaeology and genealogy of the veil.* Foucault uses the concept of archaeology to describe discourses as “practices specified in the element of the archive” where the archive is “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 24). Archaeology thus indicates an approach whereby discourses are located historically, and analysed in terms of “differences, transformations, continuities and mutations” that occur over time (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 24). This approach is particularly useful when considering the construction of the veil in relation to Muslims and/or Islam. In the eighteenth century, following colonial exploration, the Orient

was represented by European writers and artists through an essentialising discourse of mystery, inferiority, danger and sexuality (Ardizzoni, 2004). Consistent with these representations, Oriental women were constructed as subjugated, mysterious and exotic, and their separation through the veil and harems resulted in an eroticization of Eastern women (Ardizzoni, 2004). As the veil was placed at the centre of this construction, the veil itself became a symbol of desire.

The Algerian war from 1945-1962, however, signalled a change in the symbolism of the veil (Ardizzoni, 2004). Algerian women were seen as the gatekeepers of indigenous tradition and culture and were identified as an influential force behind the cultural resistance to colonial hegemony (Ardizzoni, 2004). Additionally, Algerian women played a role in the war, concealing weaponry in the folds of the *haik* (a type of veil). This led to a transformation in meanings attached to the veil. Previous stereotypes of women as subjugated and erotic were no longer sustainable, and the veil became a politicised symbol (Ardizzoni, 2004).

Foucault's concept of archaeology provides a snapshot of the discursive nexus, but his concept of genealogy looks at the on-going, processual nature of discourses (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Genealogy is thus useful when looking at how the veil is constructed today. Khiabany and Williamson (2008) note how discourses on the veil have transformed from eroticising or constructing it as evidence of women's victimhood and Islam's backward patriarchy, to constructing it as a symbol of refusal to accept 'our' culture, a sign of defiance, and an image of threat (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008). This transformation has occurred following a new convention of perceiving cultural diversity as a threat to national cohesion and British values (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008). The context for this conversion is the increased focus on terrorism and 'war on terror' discourse (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008). This indicates the situated nature of discursive constructions. At the same time though, drawing on Foucault's concept of genealogy, even though constructions have transformed it is still possible to discern continuities.

Khiabany and Williamson (2008) illustrate how *The Sun* employs four themes when reporting on the veil. Firstly, the veil is constructed as a refusal to embrace the British way of life. Secondly, British people are constructed as having been so tolerant of multiculturalism that

they now face a threat from the veil. A third construction is where Britain is seen as under threat of having a 'culture' imposed on them by a minority, and fourthly, the use of the veil is linked to the threat of terrorism (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008).

To expand on these four constructions, Khiabany and Williamson (2008) suggest that where the veil is constructed as a sign of resistance to western values, it becomes linked to a terrorist threat. Drawing on 'values' and 'terrorism' indicates the contemporary nature of this construction, but at the same time Khiabany and Williamson (2008) point out that this image has a lot in common with "the French colonial image of the veiled Muslim woman as a dangerous element in the Algerian resistance to French rule" (p. 83). Moreover, these constructions on the veil have wider implications on how Muslims are perceived as an 'other'. By depicting Western values as espousing liberty, tolerance and rights, Khiabany and Williamson (2008) argue that this creates a simplistic "clash-of-civilisations narrative" (p. 85). This depiction reflects the binary approach used with Orientalism, where the West is positioned as superior, but the Muslim/Islamic world poses a formidable threat to Western security and identity.

Khiabany and Williamson's (2008) use of *The Sun* can be criticised because it is a tabloid newspaper. Tabloids like *The Sun* have are known for their hostile reception of multicultural and race related issues (Neal, 2003). Khiabany and Williamson (2008) do acknowledge that the *Sun* is likely to use inflammatory language and factual inaccuracies to construct Muslims as a threat to British values. In this study I am interested to see if broadsheet newspapers construct the veil and Muslims in a similar way, but under the assumption that the language used will be more moderate and less explicit (van Dijk, 2000). Additionally, as the above discussion on the 'enemy within' indicates, it is assumed that constructions of the veil in Britain might be more complex. This complexity is evident in the way the construction of the veil as a symbol of Muslim women's refusal to accept Western culture and embrace modernity marks a shift in emphasis from diversity and multiculturalism to integration and assimilation (Khiabany & Williamson, 2008).

2.20 Integration and assimilation

Discussions around integration and assimilation relate to Kundnani's (2007) argument that it has become necessary to promote a national story of unified British-ness, where minorities are expected to assimilate. This focus on integration is rooted in the war on terror. Speaking in 2006, former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, announced that British-ness could no longer be taken for granted as an authentic feeling of belonging (Kundnani, 2007). Instead, he suggested it was necessary for the state to intervene and positively produce a new sense of nationhood as this would help Britain to champion democracy globally, while domestically it would address issues of asylum, immigration and community relations (Kundnani, 2007). Brown then added that the 7/7 terror attacks indicated the need for more integration in British society, and this view was also held by the Prime Minister at the time, Tony Blair, who suggested that the attacks on London were a result of the attackers not being integrated enough (Kundnani, 2007). Brown asserted that Britain needed to rediscover the shared values of liberty, responsibility and fairness that bind it together (Kundnani 2007). This emphasis on 'values' indicates that national identity is no longer a reflection of a singular unchanging ethnicity (Kundnani, 2007). Talking about values allows for a "newer, de-racialised language of social cohesion" (Lewis & Neal, 2005, p. 437). Although 'race' is done away with, national identity is assumed to be centred on cultural sameness (Kundnani, 2007). This means that cultural similarity is a necessary requirement for belonging, and those who are different must subsume their culture within British culture and declare allegiance to British values (Kundnani, 2007).

The emphasis on culture is evident in integration debates about the compatibility between British society and Muslim communities in which there are perceived alien values (Kundnani, 2007). These 'alien' values are constructed as having no place in British society. Multiculturalism as a policy, which tolerated cultural diversity, is argued to have allowed Muslims in Britain to self-segregate and live by their own values which results in extremism and ultimately fosters a home-grown terrorist threat (Kundnani, 2007). As a result, integration is now assumed to be the optimal response to diversity, but identifiable in this integrationist discourse is an assimilationist undertone and a drive toward homogeneity where British values are favoured (Bowskill, Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Worley, 2005). Muslims are therefore expected to pick a culture, and in order to be accepted, must show loyalty to a

constructed British culture (Worley, 2005). Making such a distinction between British-ness and Muslim-ness however, overlooks how identities are often transnational and forged across and through other aspects of identity such as gender or religion (Worley, 2005). This reinforces a place-bound notion of belonging, which enables dichotomous constructions of identity (Worley, 2005).

2.21 Research question and aims

The idea of there being a dichotomy between British-ness and Muslim-ness brings this discussion back to the concept of identity. To recap, in this literature review I have attempted to show how bounded notions of identity are no longer sustainable. This is because a conceptualisation of identity as bounded overlooks the complex process of identity formation in a postmodern context. Accordingly, drawing on relevant theory, I have attempted to show how identities are fractured, multiple, fluid, processual, and discursively constructed through representation. Of importance then, is the idea that identity categories are neither naturally occurring nor complete, and where boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are found, these are socially constructed. Also relevant is the idea that boundaries between categories/groups are constructed through the use of power to legitimise social divisions (Sampson, 1993). This power is seen as the reserve of dominant groups in society who are able to manage the construction of their own identity as well as the identity of others (Sampson, 1993).

Central to this study is the idea that these constructed divisions/groups are hierarchically organised, and this often results in prejudice and unequal social relations. In my literature review I have looked at how prejudice is based on difference and essentialist conceptions of the other. I also looked at how prejudice directed at others is present not only between racial groups, but also cultural and religious groups. Cultural and religious minority identities are therefore understood as susceptible to the same “social processes of systematic inequality, external labelling, and otherness” as ethnic and racial groups (Nagra, 2011, p. 427). Prejudice based on cultural or religious differences is called ‘cultural essentialism’, ‘new racism’ or ‘xeno-racism’, and in the context of discrimination against Muslims, these concepts are manifest in what is termed ‘Islamophobia’.

A distinctive characteristic of these new forms of racism is their discursive nature. And when it comes to discursive racism, the media is seen to have a critical role in its production and reproduction. This is because through the media, social representations are easily and widely shared, which can lead to uncritical acceptance and reproduction (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009). An example of how discursive racism can become well established is Orientalism. Looking at Orientalism, it is evident that anti-Muslim/Islamic sentiment has a long history rooted in colonial/imperialist ideologies, and representations. This means that prejudice toward Muslims/Islam is not new. At the same time though, the above discussions show that while racially prejudiced discourses are influenced by history, discourses surrounding Muslims in Britain today have their own distinct contemporary features linked to more recent processes of immigration, terrorism and racism (Abbas, 2001). This study therefore aims to examine how Muslims are constructed in newspapers today.

The research question is:

- How do the British print media construct the identity of ‘Muslim’ people today and how do these constructions promote or undermine a xeno-racist project?

To answer the research question, the following research aims will be addressed:

- Identify how language is used to construct Muslims
- Determine the rhetorical function of such constructions
- Consider the reciprocal constitutive relationship between existing discourses and social practices

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research is situated within a qualitative social constructionist paradigm. Qualitative research is rooted in a philosophy of knowledge that challenges quantitative, positivist approaches to knowledge development within the social sciences (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999). Qualitative research can be taken as an umbrella term encompassing diverse research approaches that have all developed their own tradition of rigor (Elliot et al., 1999). These approaches aim to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of interest (Elliot et al., 1999). For example, discourse analysis - the research approach used here, aims for an in-depth understanding by looking at the meaning of content and context rather than “simply cataloguing the forms that content take” as traditional quantitative methods would do (Vultee, 2009, p. 625). Before looking more closely at discourse analysis, the paradigm informing this research approach, social constructionism, is outlined below.

Social constructionism can be understood as a postmodern theoretical orientation (Willig, 2008). This means that social constructionists adopt a critical stance towards assumptions and knowledge about the world (Burr, 1995). All ways of understanding are seen as historically and culturally relative, so that knowledge is specific to, and the product of, particular cultures and periods of history (Burr, 1995). Understanding is constructed through social interactions and social processes and this constructed nature of knowledge means that there can be several ways of understanding the world (Burr, 1995). For social constructionists, language as a social practice is especially useful in illustrating how knowledge is socially produced. Language can be used to describe an event or phenomenon in different ways leading to different perceptions and understandings of the same thing (Willig, 2008). For example descriptions of a glass of water as ‘half-full’ or ‘half-empty’ can provide either a positive or a negative perception of a single item (Willig, 2008).

Parker (2004) explains that an emphasis on language indicates a conceptualisation of language as “materially effective” (p. 154). Language renders objects and events “thinkable and understandable” in the sense that they are given shape and meaning so that we can hold

onto our sense of what is happening (Parker, 2004, p. 157). Social constructionist research therefore looks at the constitutive nature of language and, as the above ‘glass of water’ example illustrates, is aimed at identifying the numerous available constructions of social reality in a given culture (Willig, 2008). It also looks at how these constructions are used, and what the implications might be for human experience and social practice (Willig, 2008). By offering up the idea of “constructive alternativism”, where reality is seen as constructed in multiple ways and invested with different meanings, social constructionism is seen as a liberating approach (Burr, 1998, p. 13). This is because social categories such as race are taken as human constructions, not fixed and naturally occurring, and so in principle it should be possible to re-construct categories, and critically examine those that construct people in oppressive and limiting ways (Burr, 1998).

3.2 Discourse analysis as theory and method

To explore more closely how language is used as a constructive tool, this research study uses discourse analysis as its methodology. Discourse analysis is an approach that is underpinned by a social constructionist ontology and epistemology (Nikander, 2006). The world is taken as textual and discursive, and language has more than a representational role – it constructs reality (Burr, 1998). Discourse analysis contains both methodological and conceptual elements (Wood & Kroger, 2000). This means that it is both a research method and a theory. Doing discourse analysis thus involves “treating discourse as data” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 3). And it also involves “a theoretical way of understanding the nature of discourse and the nature of psychological phenomena” (Billig, 1997, cited in Willig, 2008, p. 95). Thus discourse analysis is not simply an alternative methodology; it is an alternative to, and a critique of, mainstream psychology and the paradigms informing conventional research methodologies (Willig, 2008; Wood & Kroger, 2000). What follows is a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of discourse analysis, and how it is used as a method.

3.2.1 Discourse. When looking at discourses the interest is in how language works as a social practice, how it is constructive - defining and producing the objects of our knowledge (Hall, 2001; Parker, 1997). Language use is not restricted to spoken words, but also includes written and other semiotic modes of communication and interaction such as

newspapers, emails, advertisements, and other types of media (van Dijk, 1997; van Leeuwen, 2005). On their own, words are not fixed, self-contained units of meaning (Parker, 1999). Rather it is the way that words and phrases are utilised and put together in differing contexts that gives them meaning (Parker, 1999). This organisation of words and phrases into patterns creates systems of meaning that people can selectively draw on for communication and understanding (Parker, 1999). These patterns of meanings are referred to as discourses (Parker, 1999).

When people speak or write then they are drawing on discourses that construct events in one way or another (Burr, 1995). Where pieces of speech or writing construct the same general picture of an object they can be identified as belonging to the same discourse (Burr, 1995). The same words, phrases or pictures can, however, be used across different discourses thereby creating differing accounts (Burr, 1995). This indicates that words and phrases in themselves do not belong to certain discourses. Rather it is the way they are strung together, within particular contexts, that gives meaning (Burr, 1995). Discourses can therefore be taken as a frame of reference against which the words and phrases that are used can be interpreted (Burr, 1995). As such, there is a reciprocal relationship between discourses and the linguistic words and phrases people use (Burr, 1995). Discourses emerge from the things that people say and write, and in turn, what is said or written depends on the discursive context in which they appear for meaning (Burr, 1995).

3.2.1.1 Function. To better understand the nature of discourse, an elaboration of key underlying assumptions is necessary (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Three major assumptions are function, construction, and variation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). An important feature of discourse is the emphasis on “talk as action” where language is seen to have a performative function (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 4). Language is used to do things, such as to form requests, to persuade, or accuse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Even when seemingly describing something, language has an effect (Parker, 1997). Descriptions can end up legitimising, challenging, supporting or subverting that which it describes (Parker, 1997).

3.2.1.2 Construction. A second important feature of discourse is construction. Construction refers to the way in which accounts of events are discursively created by drawing from existing linguistic resources (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Construction also suggests active selection whereby some resources are included and others left out (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The constructed nature of discourses often means that for many, social interactions are experienced only “in terms of specific linguistic versions” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 34). An illustrative example of this could be if an individual has never met a Muslim person, but through reading many newspaper articles where Muslims are implicated in acts of terror and violence, he/she learns a constructed version of what Muslims are like. ‘Knowing’ that Muslims are violent, the individual might perceive them as a threat and deliberately avoid interactions with them. Discourses thus construct the knowledge we have about phenomena, and this knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects and so “becomes true” (Hall, 2001, p. 76).

3.2.1.3 Variation. The third important assumption is variation. Variation refers to contradictions found between and within discourses (Parker, 1997). A discourse analysis would include the identification of different constructed versions of events, and would consider the different functions of these varying constructions (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Although a constructionist approach appreciates the diversity of meaning that variation affords, from a Foucauldian perspective the idea of contradictory constructions can be linked with struggle, power and deconstruction (Parker, 1997). When contradictions within a text are identified, it becomes clear which versions are favoured and what the effects of that might be (Parker, 1997). Such critical observation then allows for dominant discourses to be deconstructed (Parker, 1997).

3.3 Foucauldian discourse analysis

When looking at discourses there are several different approaches used for doing an analysis. Two main versions are ‘discursive psychology’ and ‘Foucauldian discourse analysis’ (Willig, 2008). Discursive psychology considers the ways in which language is used to “negotiate and manage social interactions” so that interpersonal objectives are achieved (Willig, 2008, p. 95). A researcher would for instance look at how language is used to disclaim undesirable

qualities, justify actions, or attribute blame (Willig, 2008). The aim of Foucauldian discourse analysis is to provide a description and critique of the discursive worlds that people occupy, and to explore the implications that these may have on subjectivity and experience (Willig, 2008). For example, a researcher would consider an ‘asylum seeker’ and what this positioning would mean for individuals in terms of action and experience (Willig, 2008). It is necessary to stress that these two different approaches are not incompatible (Burr, 1995). They are merely a reflection of the different concerns that researchers working within the tradition have (Burr, 1995).

Another approach used often in research with newspaper discourses (eg. Richardson, 2007 and van Dijk, 1987), is critical discourse analysis (CDA). Similarly to Foucauldian discourse analysis, CDA is concerned with the use of language in relation to social problems and the production and reproduction of power (van Dijk, 2001, cited in Richardson, 2007). CDA however, relies more on a Marxist, structuralist reading of power (Wetherell, 2001, cited in Meehan & Farquharson, 2012) which differs slightly from the Foucauldian, post-structuralist conceptualisation of power used here. CDA is also rooted in linguistics whereas Foucauldian discourse analysis is used more often for objects of study within psychology (Meehan & Farquharson, 2012). Lastly CDA, in its dependence on ideas of social representation, is aligned with a sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2001, cited in Meehan & Farquharson, 2012), and this differs again from the post-structuralist approach used here.

For this study, Foucauldian discourse analysis was therefore deemed the most suitable approach. This is because it considers the influence of cultural/historical contexts, examines how objects and people are constructed and positioned within discourses, and explores the implications these have on subjectivity and experience (Willig, 2008). This approach is also concerned with “the role of discourse in wider social processes of legitimation and power” (Willig, 2008, p. 113). It is believed that dominant discourses are used to favour those versions of social reality that support existing power relations and social structures (Willig, 2008). Foucauldian discourse analysis also looks at the genealogy of knowledge and considers how discourses were initially constructed and how over time they have come to be accepted as normal (Parker, 1997). Accordingly, the point of discourse analysis is to reveal and deconstruct what is taken for granted in prevalent social practices (Graham, 2005).

Foucauldian discourse analysis is thus used to “dissect, disrupt and render the familiar strange” by examining the legitimacy of discourses and the material effects they have (Graham, 2005, p. 4).

3.4 Discourse, social structure and social practices

Burr’s (1995) discussion on the relationship between discourses and social structures and practices helps to elucidate how and why discourses have implications for subjectivity and experience. She explains that discourses are not abstract ideas used for talking about and representing things. Instead they are intimately tied up in the organisation and workings of society. Burr (1995) gives the example of how institutional structures, such as a capitalist economy, the law, education, marriage, family and the church, give shape and meaning to society. These institutions offer various social positions. For instance a capitalist economy positions individuals as ‘workers’, ‘employers’ or ‘unemployed’; the institution of marriage means people can be ‘married’, ‘single’ or ‘divorced’; and educational institutions offer ‘educated’ and ‘uneducated’ people. These ways of structuring society are put into practice daily. By going to work, receiving a wage, or relying on unemployment benefits, capitalism as an institution is put into practice. Social structures and social practices are often ensured by the law and state controls such as benefits systems and employment legal contracts.

From the above, it is evident that certain practices develop into legitimate forms of behaviour within particular discourses (Willig, 2008). In turn, discourses are reproduced by these practices thereby being legitimated as well (Willig, 2008). Discourses and practices are therefore seen as supporting one another (Willig, 2008). From a Foucauldian perspective, this is considered problematic because the interdependency between discourses, institutions, and social practices is tied up with power (Willig, 2008). Power is enacted and maintained through discourse with some discourses presented as truth over others to serve the interests of relatively powerful social groups (Burr, 1995; Willig, 2008).

3.5 Data Collection

When doing discourse analysis, it is necessary to keep in mind that this does not involve studying language in abstraction, but examining language in use (Wood & Kroger, 2000). For discursive psychologists, when speaking or writing, people are performing actions which can be revealed through an analysis of the discourse (Wetherell, 1996). This emphasis on action has led to discursive psychologists basing their research on, and collecting data from, naturally occurring text found in recordings of conversations, and documents such as newspaper articles (Wetherell, 1996).

Deciding which texts to look at can also be problematic as the researcher needs to justify why a text was chosen (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Identifying a manageable, limited body of texts wherein constructions related to the research question can be explored is also difficult (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Some sort of sampling is therefore useful, although the question of what and how much to sample depends on what it being studied (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Phillips & Hardy (2002, p. 73) suggest that “important” texts can be captured such as those that are widely distributed, those associated with changes in practices, or those that were produced in reaction to a particular event. They also suggest texts which can easily be compared, and ones which allow for “natural” (p. 74) limits to be placed around the data collection such as a particular time period.

Taking the above guidelines into consideration, data was collected using documentary sources (Kelly, 2006). Documentary sources in the form of newspaper articles were useful for this study as they have an “obviously ‘constructed’ nature and are a means by which ideas and discourses are circulated” in society (Kelly, 2006, p. 316). To find relevant data I used articles from the online archives of British newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* are two of a small number of national newspapers known as “broadsheet” or “quality” newspapers (Carvalho & Burgess, 2005, p. 1460). Using the search function on the newspapers’ websites, I searched for articles containing the terms ‘Muslims’ and ‘Islam’. By not including any other search terms, this ensured there was limited bias in choosing articles. To narrow the search down and place a limit on the data, I looked at recent articles from July 2012 going back to January 2011. Initially, the limit of exactly one year back yielded too few results for *The Daily Telegraph*,

so the time limit was extended to the beginning of 2011. I then looked at articles which contained the terms ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ in the title to ensure that the articles contained information closely related to Muslims and/or Islam, rather than just a passing reference. This produced 127 articles from *The Guardian* and 38 from *The Daily Telegraph*. In total, this gave 165 articles which were then numbered. I then placed 165 numbered pieces of paper in a bowl, and picked out 80 at random. From an initial reading of the articles I was then left with 65 articles as many of the articles were blog posts. These would have contained personal opinion, and possibly a more informal style. Published articles were also preferable as these would have appeared in print.

Broadsheet newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* were preferred over tabloid ones. In line with van Dijk’s (1992) assertion that racism has taken on the form of denial, is less explicit, and thus inherently more insidious, the linguistic style of broadsheet newspapers was considered more suitable for this study. Moreover, van Dijk’s (1996) discussion of media discourses as elite discourses is reflected in the ownership and the readership of broadsheet newspapers. The ownership and readership consists primarily of “educated, professional, economically and politically powerful individuals and groups and [so] the content and agenda of broadsheet newspapers [would reflect] the preferences and politics of this predominantly middle and upper class audience” (Richardson, 2004, p. 36). The reproduction of discourses and ideologies in broadsheets is thus considered particularly consequential (Richardson, 2004). Additionally, the linguistic style favoured by broadsheet newspapers is inclined towards providing support for controversial social opinions, whilst concurrently protecting the speaker from negative implications about his or her views (van Dijk, 1987). News items found in broadsheet newspapers thus tend to be written using “moderate, emotionally controlled language” and “more sophisticated and less explicit mechanisms [...] to control and bias the information given (Martín-Rojo, 1995, cited in Richardson, 2004, p. 53).

Having collected the data, I was aware that discourses are not “neatly packaged” in a single or several texts (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 74). No matter how much data is collected, a researcher can only find allusions to these discourses (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In addition, the interpretive nature of discourse analysis means that a researcher cannot aim to exhaust categories, he/she can only generate categories by identifying how language is used (Phillips

& Hardy, 2002). With regard to data collection and reaching saturation, the researcher does not reach an endpoint when he/she stops finding anything new (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The endpoint comes when the researcher feels that sufficient data has been collected to make a well-grounded argument (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

3.6 Why British newspapers?

The choice to focus on British newspapers came from a desire to reproduce and build on existing research in the area, but as a non-British analyst to see if the analysis will vary. Initially, because I am conducting this research from South Africa, I considered using South African newspapers. This presented a limitation to my method however, as their online archives were not easy to navigate making data collection difficult. Additionally, most of the available articles looked at international news coverage of Muslims. This means the available research data would have led to a different research focus, such as dominant Western discourses, knowledge transfers and the Western framing of stories. Given the already considerable leaning towards British print media in existing research literature (e.g. Khiabany & Williamson, 2008; Richardson, 2007; Vultee, 2009), it was decided that British newspapers were more suitable for this study. Furthermore by looking at more recent articles, going one year back, I was interested in seeing whether British newspaper constructions of Muslim people are changing or if the constructed identities of Muslims are becoming fixed. The choice of newspapers was further informed by the context of media globalisation, under the assumption that British newspaper constructions of Muslims are available to individuals in other parts of the world.

3.7 Data Analysis

When it came to the analysis of the data, the approach used was not a blind approach. To begin with, my reading of the data was guided by the existing theory discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time though, the analysis was flexible enough to generate/accommodate new ideas and insights. With regard to the specific discourse analytic approach used, I followed the recommendations of Wetherell (1998) and Luyt (2012) who both argue for a combined or synthesised approach.

Although social psychologists draw distinctions between different styles of discourse analysis, for example discursive psychology versus Foucauldian analysis, Wetherell (1998) argues that a more synthesised approach whereby one approach is read in terms of another will lead to more industrious discourse work. Luyt (2012), citing Edley and Wetherell (1997; 2008), further notes that there are two approaches to analysis: top-down and bottom-up. A top-down approach, such as Foucauldian analysis, focuses on broad concepts such as ideology and power in order to determine how individuals are constituted or positioned through discourse (Luyt, 2012). The analysis would therefore look at dominant discourses, and consider broader background features of text such as ethnicity, race, and social context (Luyt, 2012). A bottom-up approach, such as discursive psychology, involves a detailed analysis of textual features in order to describe the action-orientation of text (Luyt, 2012). Although a tension exists between these two approaches, Luyt (2012) argues that a combined approach manages this tension and accounts for the fact that individuals are at the same time both products and producers of discourse. As such, while my analysis emphasised a top-down approach, and operated within Willig's (2008) procedural stages, I also considered the contributions of other theorists for a more synthesised analytical approach. Below, I outline the main concepts used in attempting a top-down analysis. Following the recommendation of Luyt (2012), a more fine-grained analysis of the text is evident in the presentation of findings in the Discussion and Analysis chapter.

3.7.1 Willig's six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis. The data analysis was mostly guided by Willig's (2008) six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis. It must be noted though that these six stages do not compose a full analysis in the Foucauldian sense (Willig, 2008). For instance Willig's (2008) stages do not address Foucault's discussion of the "historicity and evolution of discursive formations over time" (p. 115). The stages however provide a useful framework within which the researcher can work to identify discursive resources and subject positionings used within a text, and explore the implications they may have on subjectivity and practice (Willig, 2008).

3.7.1.1 Stage one: Discursive constructions. The first stage involves identifying how discursive objects are constructed within the text (Willig, 2008). Informed by my research question (Willig, 2008), the discursive object I focused on was Muslim people and

as such I highlighted all direct and indirect references in the data. This stage does not simply rely on looking at keywords but looks instead at how the discursive object is spoken about. For example, in addition to explicit references to “Muslims”, there were also indirect references such as “some lovely ladies”, “Islamic courts”, “niqabi women” where the implication of these being Muslims was clear.

3.7.1.2 Stage two: Discourses. After identifying the sections of text that construct the discursive object, I looked at the differences between constructions (Willig, 2008). The same discursive object can be constructed in different ways and this enables the researcher to situate discursive objects within wider discourses (Willig, 2008). For example Muslim women who wear the headscarf/veil were sometimes constructed as oppressed, and at other times as a threat. This indicated wider discourses such as “Islam as misogynistic/oppressive”, and “Islam as a threat to western culture”.

3.7.1.3 Stage three: Action orientation. The next stage of analysis focuses on the action orientation of the text, and involves closely examining what the various constructions of the discursive object are capable of achieving (Willig, 2008). Here, I looked at what was gained from constructing Muslims in a particular way at a particular point within the text (Willig, 2008). For example, by constructing Islamic courts as discriminatory, it is implied that British law is superior.

3.7.1.4 Stage four: Positionings. The fourth stage looks at the subject positions on offer within a discourse (Willig, 2008). Discourses make available positions that groups can take up and/or place others in (Willig, 2008). Individuals too can position themselves or be positioned by others, with these positions being relational (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). For example, a person can be positioned as powerful in relation to powerless others (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). When people are positioned, social identities are invoked with recognition of the particular features or boundaries of those identities (Wetherell, 1998). Positions are also fluid as people take up differing positions depending on the situation (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999), and this ties in with the idea of individuals having multiple social identities. The concept of subject positioning is concerned with the idea that different

discourses position people differently, constructing their identities in different ways, and with varying degrees of power (Tuominen, 1997). This means that subject positions can have implications for subjectivity and experience (Willig, 2008). For example, by positioning Western societies as attentive to moral values, something is implied about the moral position of Muslim societies.

For van Langenhove and Harré (1999) positioning refers to discursive constructions within conversations that conjure up a concise story about a person's moral and personal attributes. Positioning always occurs within "the context of a specific moral order of speaking" (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 23), and as such what is said often implies certain rights, duties and obligations for individuals. Consideration is also given to who is allowed to speak and who remains silent and what the implications of this might be (Parker, 1997). The analysis thus looked at how Muslims were positioned in relation to others, and what particular rights and obligations were drawn on.

3.7.1.5 Stage five: Practice. Stage five considers the relationship between discourse and practice (Willig, 2008). Discursive constructions and the subject positions within them can affect opportunities for action (Willig, 2008). Particular constructions and subject positionings can enable or constrain what can be said and done (Willig, 2008). As such, certain practices or behaviours can be seen as legitimated by particular discourses. In other words practices emerge out of discourses, and in turn practices sustain those discourses. For instance, where Muslims are seen as not participating at the national level, this could be in reaction to the discourse of 'othering' that they have been subjected to. And in turn, their non-participation reproduces or legitimises their othering.

3.7.1.6 Stage six: Subjectivity. This stage of the analysis looks at the relationship between discourses and individuals' subjectivity. It considers the consequences that various subject positions can have on individuals' subjective experiences (Willig, 2008). I looked at what Muslims could possibly feel, think and experience from within various subject positions (Willig, 2008). An example is where Muslim women are constructed as oppressed by the

practice of veiling. This could have implications on their experience of agency, where their assertion of agency through voluntary submission to a divine will is overlooked.

3.8 Parker's Analytical Stance

While my analysis operated within the above six stages, Parker's (1992) analytic stance is infused within. This follows Willig's (2008) mention of how most theorists warn against following procedural guidelines too strictly. Parker (1992) agrees with this, and rather than providing an analytic method with sequential steps to follow, he suggests criteria that should be considered at each level of analysis. These criteria include rules and strategies, variation, and contexts, and these are discussed below.

3.8.1 Rules and strategies. When engaging in conversation, people display an understanding of the setting and context (Wetherell, 1998). Discourses are thus analysed in terms of how socially shared grammatical, textual, communicative or interactional rules govern text and talk (van Dijk, 1997). Discourse studies also look closely at how these rules are sometimes violated, ignored or changed, and what the function or consequences of these violations might be (van Dijk, 1997). People use different strategies to bring about understanding and the accomplishment of their communicative goals (van Dijk, 1997). When carrying out the analysis I looked for instances of these rules and strategies, and how they might govern text, or otherwise be violated. For example, as a general rule overt displays of racial prejudice are seen as unacceptable. I therefore looked for instances of violations whereby prejudiced comments were made. Or I tried to identify discursive strategies individuals employed such as pre-emptive denials: "I don't mean to be racist but..." (van Dijk, 1997).

3.8.2 Variation and variability. When analysing texts, it is often the case that people's expressed attitudes and opinions are not always consistent across social contexts (Willig, 2008). It is useful to look for the emergence of contradictory or inconsistent versions of people, their characters, and motives, states of mind, and events and try and determine why the contradiction has emerged at that point (Wetherell, 1998). It also helps to identify how

discourses can overlap, contain other discourses, or rely on other discourses (Parker, 1992). I therefore tried to identify how many discourses were at work within a text (Parker, 1992).

3.8.3 Contexts. Parker (1992) also suggests that an analysis should consider how discourses are historically located. Local, global, cultural or social contexts need to be analysed as they give rise to emergent discourses in communications (van Dijk, 1997). Discourses are not static, they change over time, and the researcher can consider the circumstances and consequences surrounding their emergence (Parker, 1992). The literature review discusses the historical trajectory of Orientalist discourse, racial prejudice and cultural essentialism, and how these have taken on new forms. Whilst mindful of historic contexts, the discourses surrounding Muslims today were also considered in light of political events such as recent terrorist bombings, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Additionally, context structures were examined because they emerge out of discourses. Texts were analysed to determine how discourses are used to reproduce existing institutions, and also to see whether the use of a particular discourse leads to the subversion of another discourse (Parker, 1992). Discourses were also examined for the way they reproduce power relations (Parker, 1992). I therefore considered which groups of people stand to gain or lose from the use of a particular discourse, and also considered who would want to promote or dissolve that discourse (Parker, 1992). Finally, the analysis looked at the ideological effects of discourses and how one discourse can connect with other discourses and sanction oppression (Parker, 1992). Discourses can be examined to show how dominant groups are able to share their narratives while the voices of other groups are subdued (Parker, 1992).

3.9 Dependability and Trustworthiness

3.9.1 Dependability. Qualitative researchers concern themselves with factors of reliability and validity when considering the quality of their study (Golafshani, 2003). When determining the quality of a study, however, it is necessary to consider reliability and validity in light of the research paradigm used. Reliability refers to the degree to which research results are repeatable, but as a valued criterion used to indicate accuracy and conclusiveness, the principle is largely informed by a positivist paradigm which takes reality as stable and

unchanging (Van de Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The social constructionist paradigm used by this study takes reality as constructed and unstable, and assumes that a researcher's own values and assumptions will influence his/her interpretation and understanding of data (Elliot et al., 1999). As such the research findings are also considered to be discursive constructions (Willig, 2008). Qualitative researchers thus propose dependability over reliability (Van de Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Dependability is the degree to which a researcher convincingly presents findings, and this can be done through rich, detailed descriptions of data collection and analysis methods (Van de Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

3.9.2 Trustworthiness. A second quality criteria used in research is validity.

Validity looks at the extent to which a study measures what it aimed to measure, and the concept is also rooted in the positivist tradition (Golafshani, 2003). While some researchers argue that validity is not applicable to qualitative research, the need for some kind of quality check has led to the concept being redefined (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative researchers thus look at the trustworthiness and rigor of the research by exploring subjectivity and reflexivity (Golafshani, 2003). Acknowledgement of my own reflexive role in the research process was necessary to ensure validity, particularly because discourses also produce a place for the reader – as the person being subjected to discourse, to make sense and meaning of the knowledge produced (Hall, 2001; Willig, 2008). To ensure interpretation validity, findings can be supported by evidence from the data, thus allowing for an appraisal of the researcher's analysis (Elliot et al., 1999). This was done by including extracts from the newspaper articles.

The extracts used were considered the most relevant to illustrate the main findings of the analysis. Using Mitchell's (1984) guidelines, I chose extracts according to how clearly and concisely they illustrated points that recurred throughout the articles. I therefore considered 'clarity', or how easily the extract was understood without needing to refer to the rest of the article. I looked at how typical or representative the extract was by considering whether the point of the analysis would remain the same if an alternative extract was used. I also chose extracts based on how detailed they were, as this would enable a more insightful and evidential discussion. The analysis also sought to identify variation within discourses and as such, I actively tried to include extracts that indicated variation.

When doing the analysis I also worked from a broad theoretical framework, looking at the functional and constructive dimensions of discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I therefore did not rigidly follow a prescribed method (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Graham (2005), in her discussion of Foucault's work, explains that Foucault himself did not provide a systemised method for uncovering how social phenomena come into existence. To do so would have been a hypocritical move against his own critique of claims to truth (Graham, 2005). Foucault was instead explicit about what he did, providing specific, meticulous details about his work (Graham, 2005). The lack of prescribed method does not mean that anything goes in a relativist way; it simply means that discourse analysts are not required to rigidly follow a specific method for doing analysis as this can inhibit innovative thought (Graham, 2005). As such, I largely followed the principles of Foucauldian analysis, and when it came to the method of analysis I used Willig (2008) as a guide, but my analysis also incorporated the work of other theorists.

To increase validity I also considered Potter and Wetherell's (1987) advice on analytic techniques that support validity. They advise that a researcher be mindful of coherence, new problems, and fruitfulness. The validity of a study depends on its 'coherence': an analysis should reflect how discourse fits together and how discursive structures serve functions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). To increase coherence, analysis should also involve looking at exceptions to the analytic pattern and this involved looking at instances of variation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). 'New problems' requires that an analysis be thorough enough to not only solve problems, but also lead to new questions arising (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). 'Fruitfulness' refers to how a researcher should be able to produce novel explanations and insights regarding the topic at hand (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The validity of my analysis also depended on Elliot et al.'s (1999) suggestion of "an additional analytical 'auditor'" (p. 222) or someone with experience in that research area. Here my research supervisor, in her capacity, examined my research study findings for credibility and coherence.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study did not include any human participants so there was little risk of harm. The data was collected from newspapers that are considered public property so publisher permission

was not required. I was also mindful throughout the research process of the fact that researchers are expected to display a suitable level of competency, conduct research with integrity, and produce work of an appropriate quality as doing otherwise can affect the credibility of the discipline (Edwards, 2004).

4. Analysis and Discussion

The research aimed to identify how the British print media construct the identity of ‘Muslim’ people today and whether or not these constructions promote or undermine a xeno-racist project. In doing this, the analysis aimed to identify how language is used to construct and position Muslims, and to determine what the function of such constructions are. The relationship between existing discourses and social practices was also considered. What is presented below provides a window into the analysis process. As discussed in the methodology section, the extracts used below were considered the most relevant to illustrate the findings of the analysis that was conducted on a total of 65 newspaper articles.

4.1 Outline of analysis

The analysis revealed that Muslims are constructed in varying ways by drawing on numerous discourses. To recap, discourse analysis understands language as constitutive of meaning, and a ‘discourse’ thus refers to the way in which words and phrases are organised into patterns of meaning (Parker, 1999). These patterns of meaning or discourses are further understood to structure social reality, especially with regards to defining subjects and their relational positions within a social system (Jackson, 2007). In practical terms, and by way of example, a discourse is identifiable through core labels, terms or discursive formations used in reference to the subject (Jackson, 2007). For example, in relation to “Muslims”, terms such as “Salafists”, “extremists”, “al Qaeda”, “Islamists”, “terrorist attacks” were often deployed within the newspaper articles. The use of such terms functions to associate Muslims with frameworks centred on violence and threat (Jackson, 2007). This introduces a discourse of Muslims as a threat (and this is often reinforced by long historic traditions of representing Muslims this way e.g. Orientalism). Additionally, these labels or terms are often juxtaposed with oppositional labels and terms such as West versus the Islamic world, extremists versus moderates, violent versus peaceful, and democratic versus totalitarian (Jackson, 2007). This functions to organise Muslims as a particular kind of subject, i.e. one to be feared or vilified, and also organises them vis-à-vis other subjects, i.e. non-violent British citizens/Westerners, within the overall discourse (Jackson, 2007).

When looking at discourses, it is important to note that discourses are never entirely uniform, coherent or consistent (Jackson, 2007). This is significant when considering how the analysis revealed multiple discourses, as well variation between and within discourses. A dominant discourse across the articles was that of Muslims as a threat. The analysis however, indicated that Muslims can be presented as a threat in various ways by drawing on different terms or associations. For instance, as the above example indicates Muslims are constructed as a terrorist threat. They are also presented as a threat by constructing *sharia* law, an associating Islamic practice, as oppositional to British values. Another way Muslims were constructed as a threat, was by presenting Muslims as antagonistic toward Christians. A second dominant discourse that emerged was Muslims as a cultural threat. Under this prevalent discourse emerged further discourses related to Muslims' isolation and non-participation in society, the position and treatment of Muslim women, the veil/headscarf as an associative practice, and issues of identity, visibility and integration. Finally, and importantly, the analysis showed that Muslims are not always constructed as a threat; they can instead be presented as a racialised 'other', but without being a threat. Or, at the other extreme, they can be discussed using an inclusive discourse indicating compatibility and tolerance. The discussion that follows deals in more depth with these predominant and emerging discourses identified across the articles, and also includes a discussion on the variation in constructions of Muslims.

To facilitate discussion, the analysis findings are discussed in the following way. The discussion is roughly organised into three main sections. The first broad section relates to how Muslims are constructed as a direct threat, the second relates to their construction as a cultural threat, and in the last part of the chapter I consider the extremes in variation. Within each of these sections, the predominant discourses present across articles are delineated. Under each predominant discourse, I look more closely at how Muslim identity is constructed. Also discussed are other available discourses that the articles drew on, but which were not as prevalent. Such an approach makes it easier to present the different discourses at work, draws attention to the overlapping of discourses, and highlights the variation found within and between discourses. It also enables a more thorough discussion that includes a micro-analysis of the specific linguistic tools used to construct Muslims, as well as a macro-analysis of meaning across texts (Richardson, 2007). Presenting the analysis this way goes

some way in showing how specific linguistic constructions, discourses, and practices fit together.

Although my discussion sought to pick out discursive racism, my intention was not to label the print media as racially prejudiced. Informed by theory, such as the work of Hall (1996) and Said (1978), it is understood that an unconscious bias is present in any reflection of reality simply because we cannot lift ourselves out of our historical location (Featherstone et al., 2010). As such, it is often the case that media discourses reflect political discourses, which themselves struggle to overcome imperial ideological discourses (Featherstone et al., 2010).

4.2 Drawing on Orientalism and/or Islamophobia

Keeping historical location, and the archaeology and genealogy of discourses in mind, in the discussion of prejudice, I draw on both Orientalism and Islamophobia. The concept of Orientalism is drawn on where constructions use binary vocabulary to differentiate between Islam/Muslims and the West. For example, the positioning of East versus West, despotism versus democracy, and backwardness versus modernity (Said, 1978). Islamophobia is used in reference to the hatred or dread of Islam and the subsequent fear or dislike of Muslims (Sheridan, 2006). Islamophobia however can be seen as a continuation of Orientalism in that it depends on the history of Orientalist constructions (Abbas, 2001). As such there is overlap between what could be termed Orientalist and what can be seen as Islamophobic. For the most part though Islamophobia is drawn on to reflect present day idiosyncrasies such as the threat from Islamists, the perceived threats that Islamic values have on free thought, civil liberties and culture, and the prejudice and hostility directed toward Muslim citizens and immigrants. Additionally, it should be noted that in the use of Islamophobia is the inherent assumption of it being racism. This follows from Fernandez's (2009) explanation that fear on the grounds of religion, and hatred on the grounds of race, ethnicity, or culture result in the same "'unfounded hostility' towards a particular group on the basis of particular perceptions, misconceptions and stereotypes" (p. 270).

4.3 Islam and Muslims as a direct/physical threat

To begin with, the analysis of the data showed that Muslims are still stereotypically discussed within discourses of terrorism and fundamentalism. Islam is associated with an extreme, violent and foreign ideology and its followers are depicted as susceptible to carrying out acts of terrorism. The discussions below look more closely at how Islam is discussed as a politicised threat. It is often depicted as espousing values that are in direct opposition to democratic ideals. To support these depictions, the articles often draw on the Islamic concept/practice of *sharia* law, and interpret this to be inherently oppressive and limiting to personal freedoms. Consideration is also given to how Muslims are subjected to processes of 'othering' and how, by using essentialist constructions, Muslims in general are associated with fundamentalism.

4.3.1 Politicised/Terrorist threat in Britain. In line with Featherstone et al.'s (2010) findings, the articles revealed a complex construction of the terrorist threat within Britain. The extract below is from an article about the jailing of Bilal Zaheer Ahmad, a 24 year old, who had posted threats on an extremist website calling on Muslims to attack and kill members of the British parliament who had voted in favour of the war in Iraq.

Extract 1

Ahmad, who holds British and Pakistani passports, had purported to be a British citizen, said Royce. "But what you stand for is totally alien to what we stand for in our country." He added that his views were "corrosively dangerous".

"It's important MPs can hold constituency surgeries without the threat of someone pulling out a knife and trying to kill them. You were intent on striking at the heart of our democracy and if our politicians are to be at risk from those like you, then the message must go out loud and clear that this country will not tolerate such threats to its democratic processes."

Ahmad posted his threat on 3 November, the day after Choudhry, a 21-year-old university student, was jailed for life for the knife attack on Timms in May last year. She stabbed him twice with a six-inch knife, damaging his liver and perforating his stomach. She later said she had been influenced by the radical sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki, a Yemen-based preacher and al-Qaida leader.

Police arrested Ahmad, at the time living in Dunstall, Wolverhampton, on 10 November. He pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to soliciting murder, publishing

written material with intent to stir up religious hatred and three counts under Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which covers collecting information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.

[...]

Ahmad, now of Wollaton, Nottingham, was born in Warwickshire and studied for A-levels at Wolverhampton College. He became radicalised as a teenager and was an active contributor to RevolutionMuslim, Islam4UK and IslamicAwakening websites. He graduated from the University of Central England with a 2:2 degree in business information technology and worked for a year as a junior development analyst at the Dorset County hospital in Dorchester.

The court heard he had also posted on Facebook a link to YouTube where he recorded a video saying: "My message to the West. You are all going to die." He was in possession of electronic copies of books called 39 ways to serve and participate in jihad and Zaad-e-Mujahid: Essential provisions of a mujahadid as well as a magazine, Inspire, which instructs English-speaking young Muslims in how to train and organise violent jihad at home.

Imran Khan, defending, said Ahmad had fallen in with members of al-Muhajiroun when aged 16 at college because he felt excluded from mainstream society. His growing interest in Islam had been at odds with the non-religious upbringing of his parents.

"During the period that someone has been indoctrinated they lose the ability to know right from wrong.

"It was wrong, it was perverted and it's one he now absolves himself from completely. He was a follower and not a leader," said Khan. (The Guardian, July 29, 2011).

In the extract a discursive struggle (Featherstone et al., 2010) is evident in the negotiation of Ahmad's identity. Although Ahmad is born in Warwickshire, and is a British citizen, the article mentions that he has both "British and Pakistani passports" (l. 1). In terms of citizenship, this suggests that he is not entirely British. His British-ness is further thrown into question by the comments of the judge, Joyce, ruling on the case. Joyce's use of words like "purported" and the statement: "what you stand for is totally alien to what we stand for in our country" (ll. 2-3), both throw into doubt Ahmad's claims that he is a citizen and also emphasise the idea of Ahmad being foreign. Additionally, the repeated reference to "our country", "our democracy", and "our politicians" (ll. 2-6) further indicates a non-inclusive rhetoric.

The extract appears to follow the same storybook characterisation identified by Featherstone et al. (2010). The complex characterisation of the central actor is detailed when looking at Ahmad. He was born and lives in Britain. He studied for his A-levels, graduated from the University of Central England with a degree in business information technology, and worked as a junior development analyst. There is also mention of his “non-religious upbringing” (l. 33). This information indicates that Ahmad possessed inclusive British characteristics, was well integrated into society, and was an ordinary, non-practising individual. At the age of sixteen though, while at college, he felt “excluded from mainstream society” (l. 32), and here there is an indication of the ‘misguided loner’.

Featherstone et al. (2010) point out how the individual is always linked back to a wider terror network, with mosques and their foreign clerics importing a foreign extremist ideology. Ahmad was an “active contributor to RevolutionMuslim, Islam4UK and IslamicAwakening websites” (l. 21) and associated with members of al-Muhajiroun. No information is given about what these websites/groups promote, and it could be assumed that they are extremist. Ahmad was also found in possession of electronic copies of books on *jihad*, and a magazine Inspire which instructs “English-speaking young Muslims in how to train and organise violent jihad at home” (ll. 29-30). Such details could serve to legitimise the war on terror discourse because it indicates that there is a real threat “at home”. The article appears to individualise this threat without implicating the entire Muslim community in Britain. Ahmad was “indoctrinated” and he now realises it was “wrong”, “perverted”, and he “absolves himself from it completely” (l. 37). That said however, it is mentioned that this was an attempt to “stir up religious hatred” (l. 16). By depicting it as a religious, and not a political act, terrorism is portrayed as rooted in religion, and as such any religious Muslim could be considered susceptible to following this path.

Extract 2

White Muslim convert Richard Dart and a former police community support officer were among six people arrested for allegedly plotting a terror attack in Britain.

Richard Dart, who was radicalised by the cleric Anjem Choudary, was held following police raids in east and west London.

A former PCSO and two of his brothers, who were living just over a mile from the Olympic site in Stratford, were also among those detained during the police and MI5 operation to prevent a suspected terror assault.

One of the brothers was Tasered by officers. Counter-terrorism police had first searched their home last November.

The Daily Telegraph understands the police moved over fears that a group had obtained a sword which could potentially be used in a terrorist attack.

Mr Dart, 29, the son of Dorset teachers, featured in a BBC documentary last year filmed by his own brother about his conversion. During the film, called *My Brother the Islamist*, he was seen protesting about British soldiers in Afghanistan and accused them of being “murderers”. (The Daily Telegraph, July 29, 2011).

In extract 2 above a similar characterization of radical Muslims within Britain takes place. Richard Dart is a white Muslim convert accused of plotting a terror attack in Britain. His white identity, former occupation as a police community support officer, and his parents being “Dorset teachers” (l. 12), all indicate inclusive British attributes. He was however “radicalised by the cleric Anjem Choudary” (l. 3). Choudary can be taken as the foreign cleric importing a foreign extremist ideology (Featherstone et al., 2010). In this extract, the inclination toward terror attacks can partly be seen as a response to the war in Afghanistan. Dart, in a documentary called *My Brother the Islamist*, was seen “protesting about British soldiers in Afghanistan and accused them of being ‘murderers’” (ll. 14-15). This was a theme recurrent throughout the data where acts of terror, violence, and resistance were often discussed within a context of anger expressed toward events occurring in the Middle East. Presumably this is done out of a sense of solidarity with the global Muslim community.

4.3.1.1 Addressing the terrorist threat in Britain. In response to the perceived threat of terrorism in Britain, the extracts below are from articles indicating an effort towards dealing with this threat. Discussions surrounding the threat of home-grown terrorism appear to draw on multiple discourses of tolerance, integration, Orientalism and security. There also appear to be inconsistencies or contradictions in apportioning blame and/or responsibility. This is expanded on below.

Extract 3

David Cameron will today signal a sea-change in the government fight against home-grown terrorism, saying the state must confront, and not consort with, the non-violent Muslim groups that are ambiguous about British values such as equality between sexes, democracy and integration.

To belong in Britain is to believe in these values, he will say. Claiming the previous government had been the victim of fear and muddled thinking by backing a state-sponsored form of multiculturalism, the prime minister will state that his government "will no longer fund or share platforms with organisations that, while non-violent, are certainly in some cases part of the problem".

In a major speech to a security conference in Munich, he will demand: "We need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism."

He will say that "some organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community are showered with public money while doing little to combat extremism.

...

Cameron will argue many young men have been drawn to extremism due to a rootlessness created by the weakening of a clear collective British cultural identity.

He will say: "Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong.

"We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. So when a white person holds objectionable views – racism, for example – we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices have come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious, frankly even fearful, to stand up to them." (The Guardian, February 5, 2011).

Extract 3 is from an article that discusses a speech to be delivered by David Cameron. In this speech, Cameron is to "signal a sea-change" (l. 1) in the fight against home-grown terrorism. The idiom "sea-change" suggests a large transformation, and words like "fight" and "confront" (ll. 1-2) suggest a direct, confrontational manner. In this extract a discourse of tolerance is apparent where Britain is constructed as having been too lenient towards Muslim groups, and consequently they are now facing a threat from home-grown terrorists.

Part of the blame/responsibility for this home-grown threat is attributed to non-violent Muslim organisations within Britain. The extract mentions how Muslim organisations are “certainly in some cases part of the problem” (l. 9), and while “showered with public money”, they are “doing little to combat extremism” (ll. 14-15). This suggests that the Muslim community in Britain is responsible for solving the problem of extremism. Featherstone et al. (2010) argue that when the responsibility for monitoring and tackling problems in society is placed within specific communities the authorities are relieved of blame. This also creates a conflict between the discourse of integration - where Muslims are positioned within British-ness and encouraged to self-monitor, and the implicit suggestion that Muslims are responsible for Britain’s problems (Featherstone et al., 2010).

Extract 3 also indicates a discourse of British superiority and othering. Values such “equality between sexes, democracy and integration” (ll. 3-4) are “British values” and non-violent Muslim groups are constructed as “ambiguous” about these values. It is suggested that this ambiguity means they do not belong in Britain, because “To belong in Britain is to believe in these values” (l. 5). At the same time though, a contradiction appears where Cameron assumes responsibility by saying “We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong” (ll. 19-20). This failure is, however, again presented through a discourse of tolerance. The shortcoming, or fault, of British society is that it was too tolerant of communities behaving in ways that ran counter to their values. They were “too cautious, frankly even fearful, to stand up to them” (ll. 24-25).

A discourse of integration is again apparent where integration is presented as a solution. It is suggested that young men become attracted to extremism because of a “rootlessness created by the weakening of a clear collective British cultural identity” (l. 17). The word “rootlessness” could refer to a diasporic identity where these young men, as ethnic/religious minorities, perhaps struggle to define their identity in Britain, while maintaining an attachment to a culture/religion that surpasses geographic borders (Palmer, 2000). The solution to this is “a clear collective British cultural identity”. This integrationist discourse appears to have assimilative undertones because tolerating communities that behave in ways that run counter to “our values” is presented as problematic. As such, it is implied that different cultures are expected to conform to “our values”. This also reflects Lentin’s (2007)

racist state where the 'other' is subsumed under a drive toward homogeneity, and expected to conform.

Although this article is looking at "home-grown" terrorism and the British government's attempts to combat it, Cameron's speech is to be delivered at a "security conference in Munich" (l. 10). This is interesting, and suggests that the threat posed is still linked to foreign, transnational Islamist networks. In extract 4 below, from the same article, Cameron's "audience" which is assumedly 'Europe' is warned that it needs to "wake up to what is happening in our own countries" (ll. 1-2). In this way, the blame is again averted from the British government, as the threat of extremism is present in all European countries. This introduces an Orientalist discourse where Europe is positioned as facing a threat from a terrorist 'other'.

When looking at this terrorist 'other' though, an inconsistency is apparent in the linking of terrorism to Islam. In extract 3 above, there is an implicit suggestion that the Muslim community is responsible for combatting extremism. Extract 4 though, from the same article, contains an unambiguous assertion that Islamist extremism is an ideology that is "entirely separate from Islam" (l. 4).

Extract 4

He will warn his audience: "Europe needs to wake up to what is happening in our own countries. We need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of these terrorist attacks lie – and that is the existence of an ideology, Islamist extremism."

This ideology he says, is entirely separate from Islam, and "at the furthest end includes those who back terrorism to promote their ultimate goal: an entire Islamist realm, governed by an interpretation of sharia".

But he adds: "Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist world-view including real hostility towards western democracy and liberal values. (The Guardian, February 5, 2011).

Although this distinction is made, it comes later, after Cameron has already indistinguishably spoken about non-violent “Muslim” groups and organisations rather than “Islamist” groups. An Islamist ideology is presented as working along a “spectrum” (l. 7), with those backing terrorism at one end, and people who reject violence at the other end. Those rejecting violence are depicted as accepting of “various parts of the extremist world-view including real hostility towards western democracy and liberal values” (ll. 8-9). This suggests that all Islamists, violent or not, can be considered a threat to western values.

The depiction of Islamists as inherently hostile toward western values can be criticised though as is evident in extract 5 below.

Extract 5

Muslims must embrace "British" values of freedom, democracy and equal rights, he declared, as if the vast majority didn't do so already. Jihadist terror attacks were not driven by British and US wars in the Muslim world, he insisted – in the face of his own intelligence reports – but by an "extremist ideology" rooted in problems of "identity".

[...]

And by branding political Islam as extremist, he's playing on the ignorance of those for whom Muslim and Islamist are as good as indistinguishable. What is called Islamism includes a wide spectrum of political trends, peaceful and violent, socially conservative and progressive, from Turkey's ruling party to al-Qaida. Mainstream Islamists, certainly including almost all the groups Cameron is now casting into outer darkness, are in fact committed to democratic freedoms. (The Guardian, February 9, 2011).

Extract 5 is from another article that appeared in the same newspaper, where Cameron's speech is criticised for its inaccurate depiction of both Muslims and Islamists. The inclusion of an article which opposes the views in a previously published article makes it difficult to conclude that *The Guardian* newspaper is itself inherently biased in the opinions or representations it publishes. There does appear to be some balance and variation. In extract 5, the author adopts a cynical tone. In response to Cameron's assertion that Muslims must embrace “British” (l. 1) values, the author retorts with “as if the vast majority didn't do so already” (l. 2). The author also places “British” within quotation marks suggesting perhaps

that the values of “freedom, democracy and equal rights” (l. 1) are not exclusively British. He then refutes Cameron’s claim that terror attacks in Britain are driven by an extremist ideology “rooted in problems of ‘identity’” (ll. 4-5). He says Cameron makes this claim “in the face of his own intelligence reports” (ll. 3-4), and attributes the terror attacks to the British and US wars in the Muslim world.

In extract 5, the author points out that Cameron’s “branding [of] political Islam as extremist” (l. 6) plays on the “ignorance of those for whom Muslim and Islamist are as good as indistinguishable” (ll. 6-7). Added to this, the author also says that Islamism is misrepresented. He too refers to a “spectrum” of political trends encompassing both “peaceful and violent” (l. 8) strands, but points out that there are mainstream Islamist groups “committed to democratic freedoms” (l. 11) which opposes Cameron’s claim that all Islamists reject democracy and liberal values.

4.3.2 Sharia law as a politicised threat. In relation to political Islamists, the data also revealed a discourse that draws on *sharia* law as repressive and oppositional to democratic ideals.

Extract 6

The al-Nour party is the main political arm of the hard-line Salafi movement which, unlike the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood, is a new player on Egypt's political scene.

Guided by a Saudi-inspired school of thought, Salafists have long shunned the concept of democracy, saying it allows man's law to override God's. But they decided to form parties and enter politics after the exit of Mubarak in February.

Salafi groups speak confidently about their ambition to turn Egypt into a state where personal freedoms, including freedom of speech, women's dress and art, are constrained by sharia.

"In the land of Islam, I can't let people decide what is permissible or what is prohibited. It's God who gives the answers as to what is right and what is wrong," Hamad said. "If God tells me you can drink whatever you want except for alcohol, you don't leave the million things permitted and ask about the prohibited." (The Guardian, December 2, 2011).

Extract 6 above discusses the Egyptian al-Nour political party. Al-Nour is described as a “hard-line Salafi movement” (l. 1). *Salafism* refers to one of several major tendencies among those who take Islam as a reference point for their thinking, discourse and engagement (Ramadan, 2004). For Salafis the *Qur’an* and *Sunna* are interpreted “in an immediate way, without scholarly conclaves” (Ramadan, 2004, p. 25). They therefore take a literal approach that forbids interpretive readings, as interpretation, by definition, is believed to contain error and innovation (Ramadan, 2004). When looking at political engagement, *Salafi* discourse is seen as forceful, radical and opposed to any involvement or corroboration with non-Islamic spaces or actors (Ramadan, 2004). This is suggested in the extract above. The term “hard-line” suggests an authoritative or absolutist movement. They are described as having “long shunned” (l. 4) democracy because it enables “man’s law to override God’s” (l. 5). The word “shunned” suggests that democracy is a system they have deliberately avoided or rejected. Despite rejecting democracy however, they have decided to take part in the election process. Their reason for entering politics seems underhanded though, as the next paragraph reveals their ambition is to turn Egypt into a state governed by *sharia* law.

Sharia law is depicted as limiting toward “personal freedoms, including freedom of speech, women's dress and art” (l. 8). As such, it could be perceived as misogynistic and oppressive. The extract then quotes a spokesperson for the al-Nour group, who calls Egypt “The land of Islam” (l. 10), demarcating it as an Islamic space. He then adds that he “can’t let people decide what is permissible or what is prohibited” (ll. 10-11); rather it is God who has this authority.

While it is not within the remit of this thesis to explore the complex nature of *sharia* law, it is important to briefly look at the sources of *sharia* law. *Sharia* is an Arabic term that roughly translates to ‘the way’ or ‘path to be followed’ (Mashhour, 2005; Ramadan, 2004). Essentially it shows Muslims how to be and remain Muslim, and extends to all aspects of a Muslim’s life, including prayer, giving charity, fasting, dress, and respect for ethics (Ramadan, 2009). The primary source of reference for Islamic law is the *Qur’an* which Muslims believe is the word of God (Mashhour, 2005). A second important source is the *Sunna* which refers to the tradition – including the teachings, practices and model of

behaviour - of the Prophet Muhammad (Mashhour, 2005). The other sources of *sharia* include analogy (*Qiyas*), consensus among Muslim scholars (*Ijma*), and independent juristic reasoning (*Ijtihad*) (Mashhour, 2005; Ramadan, 2004). *Sharia* law is thus believed to consist of timeless, universal principles derived from the divine (*Qur'an* and *Sunna*), but because there is room for independent human reasoning, it also consists of socially and historically derived interpretation (Mashhour, 2005). This distinction is important when considering how the ideal of *sharia* has been betrayed by Muslims themselves, who take it as wholly divine, and use it for repressive purposes (Mashhour, 2005; Ramadan, 2004).

4.3.3 Muslims as a threat to Christians. The use of *sharia* for repressive purposes was also present within discussions on the political threat that non-Muslims face from Muslims. The data offered a particular focus on Christian-Muslim relationships, revealing a discourse around the antagonistic relationship between Muslims and Christians. The extracts that follow indicate how Christians were positioned as under threat in populous Muslim nations like Nigeria and Egypt. The persecution of Christians by Muslims contributes to the image of Muslims and Islam as threatening, violent and oppressive. This threatening image is also enhanced by drawing on discourses related to Islamists.

Extract 7

The Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, has confirmed for the first time that the Islamist group Boko Haram has secret backers among government and security officials.

Jonathan said Boko Haram presents Nigeria's greatest security challenge since the 1967 Biafra civil war, when a three-year campaign by the Igbo people to secede from the country's 150 other tribes left a million dead.

The organisation, whose name means "non-Islamic education is sacrilege", is fighting to impose a strict interpretation of *sharia* law across Africa's most populous country. A simmering low-level insurgency erupted on Christmas Day with four co-ordinated attacks that killed at least 30 people as they poured out of church services. Since then, a spree of violence at churches has claimed dozens of lives, prompting a state of emergency in the group's northern homebase states and threatening to ignite a sectarian conflict in a country split evenly between Muslims and Christians. (The Guardian, January 9, 2012).

In the extract above the Islamist group Boko Haram is presented as a threat to Nigerian security. The Boko Haram group is seen as responsible for violence against Christians in Nigeria. The article uses several techniques to augment this threat posed by the group. The extract initially draws evidence from a statement by the Nigerian president. The position of “president” means his social location gives weight to his statement, and here the article is using a device called category entitlement (Potter, 1996). This device refers to the way claims can be verified by a speaker who, possessing certain characteristics or skills, is entitled to speak in a particular category (Potter, 1996). As president, Jonathan would have knowledge of government activity, and he “confirmed for the first time” (l. 1) that Boko Haram has “secret backers among government and security officials” (ll. 2-3). A referential technique (Richardson, 2007) is used when naming “government” and “security officials”. As these carry social meaning in terms of influence or power within a country, the apparent backing for Boko Haram from these sources increases the perceived threat. The fact that it is “secret” also implies that this support is amiss. The president is then quoted as saying Boko Haram present the “greatest security challenge since the 1967 Biafra Civil War” (ll. 4-5). By using the superlative “greatest”, the article employs an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), which is when an evaluative dimension is used to its extreme limits (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This places a pronounced emphasis on the threat. Furthermore, by comparing the threat to the 1967 Biafra Civil War which left a million dead, it is suggested that the consequences of this threat could be as severe.

The article then provides a brief explanation of the meaning of Boko Haram, and the organisation’s name. Meaning “non-Islamic education is sacrilege” (l. 7), the name suggests a sharp polarisation between Muslim and non-Muslim values. The words “fighting” and “impose” (ll. 7-8) imply an aggressive attempt by the group to force *sharia* law on the country. Describing Nigeria as “Africa’s most populous country” (l. 8) might also function to bring attention to how large or widespread the effect of this would be. There is acknowledgment that this is a “strict interpretation” (l. 8) of *sharia* law by an “Islamist group”. That said, however, it is important to look at where this fits in the article and how it is narrated. When looking at the narrative form in the extract, or how the story is presented (Richardson, 2007), the extract begins with setting up the ominous threat that this group poses. It then establishes what Boko Haram stands for, and while there is mention of this

being an “interpretation” of *sharia*, the next sentence, and the rest of the paragraph moves on quickly to the violence witnessed against Christians.

The violence against the Christians was the result of a “simmering” (l. 9) low-level rebellion, suggesting that this conflict has been imminent. The attacks were also coordinated indicating that this was premeditated. The premeditation and attacks on people as they left church makes the violence against the Christians seem cold blooded and cruel. Following this, the paragraph mentions the threat of sectarian conflict between Muslims and Christians, with the words “threatening to ignite” (l. 12) carrying on with the theme of an ominous threat about to erupt. There is no differentiation made at this point between “Islamists” and “Muslims”, however. Furthermore, by saying Nigeria is a “country evenly split” (l. 13) between Muslims and Christians, the word “split” suggests an antagonistic divide, rather than a mere equality in numbers. Muslims are thus undifferentiated as a group from Islamists, who might actually pose a threat, and are positioned as a threat to Christians in Nigeria.

In extract 8 below, Egypt’s Coptic community is also seen as a religious minority “facing increasing persecution” (ll. 7-8) and being denied their rights.

Extract 8

Speaking in Indonesia, the world’s largest Islamic country, the Prime Minister will urge young Muslims to abandon “the dead-end choice of dictatorship and extremism” by forcing their countries to hold elections.

He will claim it would be “the greatest defeat that Al Qaeda could ever suffer,” if more rebel and follow the lead of the young Muslims who sparked the Arab Spring.

Mr Cameron will express his concern for the rights of millions of Christians, especially in Egypt, where the Coptic minority say they are facing increasing persecution. In a strong rebuke to Egypt’s powerful Muslim Brotherhood party, Mr Cameron will demand it does not “deny the rights of religious minorities who do not share their specific religious views”.

Egypt’s Coptic community, which accounts for 10 per cent of the country’s 80 million population, has been subjected to a continuous campaign of sectarian attacks since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak last February. Thirteen were killed last May and another 10 two months before in attacks by suspected Islamists. (The Daily Telegraph, April 12, 2012).

In the extract, British Prime Minister David Cameron urges “young Muslims to abandon ‘the dead-end choice of dictatorship and extremism’ by forcing their countries to hold elections” (ll. 2-3). This reflects an Orientalist approach whereby Eastern/Muslim governments are seen as despotic. The concern over rights and the persecution of Christians in Egypt shows Britain’s moral positional superiority as it suggests that these are not valued in Muslim countries. The words “strong rebuke” (l. 8) and “demand” (l. 9) further indicate superiority because they suggest that Cameron has authority or influence over Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood which is itself described as “powerful” (l. 8).

In extract 8 the attacks against the Christian community appear calculated and unremitting, “a continuous campaign” (l. 12). Only at the end of the extract is mention made that the attacks are carried out by “suspected Islamists” (l. 14), but it is not specific about which Islamist group. Specifying the Islamist group is important as mentioned in extract 5 above, because not all Islamist groups are inherently violent.

The above two extracts (7 and 8) indicate an Orientalist practice whereby Muslim nations are constructed as despotic, with an implicit assumption that the British system of democratic government is superior. Muslims are depicted as violent and intolerant toward Christians. While they are constructed as a threat, they occupy a Muslim space, and so do not threaten the identity of Britain. In the following extract though, Muslims are constructed as now posing an internal threat to the identity of British Christians.

Extract 9

Mrs Halawi, who came to Britain from Lebanon in 1977, worked in the duty-free section as a perfume saleswoman of the airport for 13 years but was dismissed in July.

Her case is being supported by the Christian Legal Centre, who say it raises important legal issues and also questions over whether Muslims and Christians are treated differently by employers.

It comes amid growing concern among some Christians that their faith is being marginalised and follows calls from Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, for Christians to be given greater legal protection in the wake of a series of cases where they have been disciplined or dismissed for practising their faith.

[...]

Mrs Halawi, 47, said: "I have been sacked on the basis of unsubstantiated complaints so there is now great fear amongst my former colleagues that the same could happen to them if one of the Muslims turns on them.

"This is supposed to be a Christian country, but the law seems to be on the side of the Muslims."

A mother of two, she says that she had always got on well with her Muslim colleagues and relations between staff of different faiths had been good in the past, but that the atmosphere became increasingly uncomfortable with a growing number of employees espousing "fundamentalist Islam".

She says they harassed Christians at work by making fun of them for wearing crosses, ridiculing Jesus and telling them they would go to Hell if they did not convert to Islam.

"One man brought in the Koran to work and insisted I read it and another brought in Islamic leaflets and handed them out to other employees," she said.

"They said that 9/11 served the Americans right and that they hated the West, but that they had come here because they want to convert people to Islam. (The Daily Telegraph, November 27, 2011).

Extract 9 is from an article in which consideration is given to the relationship between, and the treatment of, Muslims and Christians in Britain. This Muslim-Christian relationship is discussed in relation to a case where a Christian lady named Mrs Halawi lost her job due to complaints made by her Muslim colleagues. Mrs Halawi appears to espouse a postmodern, immigrant identity in Britain. She is a Lebanese immigrant, and now a British citizen. Coming from Lebanon, Mrs Halawi is assumedly of Arab ethnicity but the article appears to disregard ethnic differences, focusing instead on religious identity. This indicates how religious belonging, like race and ethnicity, is used as a symbol of difference. While Mrs Halawi's identity is detailed, her Muslim colleagues are indistinguishably referred to as "the Muslims" (l. 12). This concretises their religious identity, but also contributes to an Islamophobic attitude whereby Muslims are spoken of as a monolithic whole.

The Islamophobic attitude is continued as Muslims are constructed as a threat. Mrs Halawi mentions the "great fear" (l. 11) that her former colleagues have "if one of the Muslims turns on them" (l. 12). The idea that one of the Muslims might turn on a colleague implies that they

cannot be trusted. She then mentions how the work atmosphere “became increasingly uncomfortable with a growing number of employees espousing ‘fundamentalist Islam’” (ll. 17-18). A link is thereby drawn between Muslim employees and fundamentalism, and Mrs Halawi goes on to mention how they harassed Christians and mocked and insulted their religious practices and beliefs. She also says they “hated the West” and wanted to “convert people to Islam” (ll. 24-25). This positioning of Muslims as hostile towards the West draws on the Orientalist dichotomy of East versus West. And the idea that Muslims want to convert people to Islam is suggestive of a constitutive outside, whose presence threatens the identity of British people.

Interestingly, the extract is seen to employ a device known as inversion (Fozdar, 2008). When taking into consideration the construction of Muslims across the data, they are often seen as a minority, or marginalised group in Britain. In the above extract though, this is inverted and attention is drawn to the “concern among some Christians that their faith is being marginalised” (ll. 6-7). And when Mrs Halawi says that the “law seems to be on the side of the Muslims” (ll. 13-14) there is an indication that Muslims receive preferential treatment. Mrs Halawi also asserts that Britain “is supposed to be a Christian country” (l. 13), indicating a belief that Muslims don’t belong in Britain. Although Mrs Halawi’s comments could be interpreted as xeno-racist, the article, by using an Orientalist discourse, appears to justify her comments. The Muslims, although constructed as inferior, are perceived as having a greater potential for destructive power (Said, 1981).

There is more evidence of an Orientalist discourse when Mrs Halawi is described as a “mother of two” (l. 15) who always “got on well with her Muslim colleagues” (ll. 15-16). She is thus constructed as a rational person, and the personal information about her immigration and children humanises her and gives her an identity. The Muslims by contrast, are spoken of in monolithic terms, with no information on their ethnicity or even gender. Additionally, where they are cited as saying that “9/11 served the Americans right” (l. 24), they could be perceived of as irrational and callous. An Orientalist approach is also evident in the use of the word “Koran” (l. 22). Vultee (2009) argues that the use of older transliterations such as ‘Koran’ for *Qur’an* reflects reluctance by conservative press commentary to give up familiar terms in order to accommodate ‘others’.

The above discussions show that Muslims and/or Islam are still discussed using a socio-political discourse whereby they are seen as violent, extremist and oppressive. In this way, Islam is linked to negative traits and negatively differentiated from Britain's positive traits. A clear hierarchy is constructed with Britain, representing the West, positioned as morally superior because of the democratic ideals it upholds. In contrast, Islamic ideals are presented as undemocratic, oppressive and threatening. A binary discourse of good versus evil is therefore generated (Kellner, 2004), justifying the Islamophobic rhetoric that is drawn on within the articles.

4.4 Muslims as a cultural threat

As shown above, Muslims are constructed as posing a physical and/or direct threat especially in terms of violence. The data however, also showed that Muslims are constructed as presenting a more indirect threat to the culture and values of British society. Looking at discourses that draw on 'culture' is important because, as discussed in the literature review chapter, racism today no longer relies on biological factors (Verkuyten, 2003). Instead differences are discursively constructed using cultural or religious signifiers. The discussions below indicate that Islamic/Muslim cultural and religious practices/values are often constructed as different, and are replete with assumptions and stereotypes that contribute to an overall negative image of Muslims. Here, van Dijk's (1998) concept of the ideological square is evident, where minority out-groups are subjected to negative depictions, and the majority in-group is positively depicted. Embedded within these constructions are usually discourses of isolationism, participation in society, treatment of women, visibility, rights, and extremism/fundamentalism.

4.4.1 Isolation and non-participation in society. Extract 10 is from an article that appears to draw on all these discourses. The article is about an Islamic group in London, the Tablighi Jamaat, which is trying to keep its mosque from being closed down. This Islamic group is not ‘Islamist’, nor discussed using a rhetoric of terror. It is, however, described as a “supremacist movement” encouraging “isolation from wider British society” (ll. 2-3). Usually, forms of racism involve an imagined ‘self’ asserting an ‘other’ leading to boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Allen, 2010). In this article the Tablighi Jamaat is differentiated as an ‘other’, but interestingly the usual process of racism is inverted, and here the minority group is doing the excluding. The group is described as “supremacist” which invokes suggestions of an extreme, threatening, racist ideology.

Extract 10

An Islamic group fighting to keep its east London mosque, near to the Olympics site, has been described by opponents as a "supremacist movement" that encourages isolationism from wider British society.

Tablighi Jamaat, a global proselytising movement with tens of thousands of members in the UK, is trying to overturn an enforcement notice on its mosque, called the Riverine Centre, after temporary planning permission expired in 2006.

A planning inquiry at Newham town hall will determine whether the group can continue to use the modest collection of buildings. On Thursday it heard that followers of Tablighi Jamaat were taught to "shun integration with all unbelievers in order to be uncontaminated Muslims and to isolate themselves from wider society".

According to evidence from Dr Taj Hargey, an imam who runs a progressive Islamic educational centre in Oxford, the "isolationist dynamic" of Tablighi Jamaat has caused the growth of a "separatist Muslim enclave" in the streets around its Dewsbury headquarters.

Hargey was called as a witness by Newham Concern, a local campaign group which has long opposed Tablighi Jamaat and its ambitions to expand its facilities. The group is behind plans to build a much larger facility at the site, dubbed a "megamosque" by the media, although it currently has no planning application in place.

Hargey told the inquiry that Tablighi Jamaat had "achieved very little for the community" and rejected the group's assertions that closing the mosque would lead to the marginalisation of Muslim youth.

He said: "Over the past 14 years that TJ has occupied the site it has furnished no proven track record of opening their facilities to the wider Muslim community, let alone non-Muslim community. In that time they have not even managed to create any

facilities for women. The facility itself currently contributes substantially to marginalisation". He described it as a "supremacist movement with adverse implications for the government's community cohesion policies".

Newham Concern also called Tehmina Kazi, from the group British Muslims for Secular Democracy, as a witness.

Kazi, speaking in a personal capacity, said the government's national planning policy sought to promote "mixed and balanced communities" and that Tablighi Jamaat was "particularly inward-looking" because it only engaged with other Muslims. "The main issue is not that they are a socially conservative movement, but the fact they have been reluctant to engage in dialogue with people who are different."

Newham council has said it wants to shut the mosque down over concerns about traffic levels, land contamination and visual impact. (The Guardian, February 18, 2011).

In the extract, the idea of a "supremacist" ideology and an isolationist discourse is carried throughout. The Muslim group is constructed as self-isolating and their exclusion from the wider British society is self-imposed. Self-segregation is considered problematic because it is believed to sustain cultural difference (Phillips, 2006). That this segregation is self-imposed, functions to remove blame from the wider British society because their isolation is voluntarily undertaken. The followers of the group are said to be taught to "shun integration with all unbelievers in order to be uncontaminated Muslims and to isolate themselves from wider society" (ll. 9-10). The word "shun", suggesting deliberate avoidance, and the words "unbelievers" and "uncontaminated" make it seem as though this group is disparaging to those who do not follow the same faith. The article draws on "evidence" (l. 11) from an *imam*, Dr Taj Hargey, who says the Tablighi Jamaat's "isolationist dynamic" (l. 12) has caused a "separatist Muslim enclave" (l. 13). It also quotes Tehmina Kazi who says they are "particularly inward looking" (l. 32) and "reluctant to engage in dialogue with people who are different" (l. 34).

Assumingly, because Hargey is an *imam* (leader), and Kazi is the director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, and because they are both Muslim, they are taken as expert commentators. Hargey runs a "progressive" (l. 11) Islamic educational centre and is therefore likely to hold liberal views. His "progressive" strand is possibly met with opposition from more conservative Muslim groups. Kazi is a female activist, and her group, British Muslims for Secular Democracy, aims to increase interaction between Muslims and the wider British

society (Organisation Objectives, 2012). The objectives of her group likely differ from the Tablighi Jamaat group which she says “only engaged with other Muslims” (l. 32). What this article appears to overlook then is that the views of Hargey and Kazi, coming from liberal groups, are likely to be biased against the Tablighi Jamaat group because of differences in religious views and group objectives. The article is also biased in that it does not include any commentary from members of the Tablighi Jamaat group.

The Tablighi Jamaat group is described as “a global proselytising movement with tens of thousands of members in the UK” (ll. 4-5). The fact that it is “global” and has “tens of thousands of members” suggests its influence is widespread, and this could be received with alarm. The Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic movement, influenced by the Deobandi tradition in India (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). The Deobandi tradition sought to acquaint Muslims with a pure unalloyed Islam liberated from cultural influences, and close the gap between scholars and the illiterate Muslim masses (Vahed, 2003). The Tablighi Jamaat movement is an offshoot of this tradition and their objective is to promote religious enclaves of proper Islamic practice and belief (Vahed, 2003). Vahed (2003) says that assimilation, multiculturalism, and political mediation are not objectives, and this indicates that the group’s aims differ from Kazi’s British Muslims for Secular Democracy. As a tradition originating in India, Britain’s large South Asian Muslim community is likely to identify with this movement, accounting for the large number of members. Calling them a “proselytising movement” is again alarmist in tone if the suggestion is that they are trying to convert people to Islam. Islamic mission work, or *da’wah*, is believed to be a duty of Muslims (Mumisa, 2002). *Da’wah* however, only entails informing people about the message of Islam, with the implicit knowledge and understanding that guidance comes from God alone (Mumisa, 2002). This means that the Muslim’s responsibility is not to convert people, but simply to convey a message, and this would be similar to other religious groups’ efforts to invite people to their faith.

The article appears to be biased when it constructs the Tablighi Jamaat as not contributing or achieving anything for the community. Hargey says that they have no “proven track record of opening their facilities to the wider Muslim community, let alone non-Muslim community” (ll. 22-24). This appears to be in contradiction to the “proselytising” label used

earlier. Additionally, it seems as though a responsibility toward the community is being expected of them, when that it not the objective of their existence. They are also presented as misogynistic where Hargery says “they have not even managed to create any facilities for women” (ll. 24-25). The article mentions how they are using a “modest collection of buildings” (l. 8), and later mentions that they plan to “expand their facilities” (l. 16). If at present the mosque is “modest” and in need of expanding, it could be speculated that preference is given to accommodating men, since prayer at the mosque is stressed for men, but not an obligation for women (Al-Johar, 2005). This is difficult to determine from the article alone however, as no members of the mosque, male or female, are quoted.

Finally, the above negative constructions of the group seem closely linked to what could be perceived as the problematic physical presence of the mosque. The London mosque is near to the Olympics site, and although the group is using a “modest collection of buildings” (l. 8) it intends to build a much larger facility “dubbed a ‘megamosque’ by the media” (ll. 17-18). Notably, here the article cites “the media”. *The Guardian* is part of the media too, but this citation provides a distancing from the use of the moniker “megamosque”. This is perhaps an indication of how broadsheets are inclined toward using sophisticated, implicit linguistic techniques that both provide support for controversial social opinions, whilst concurrently protecting the speaker from negative implications about his or her views (van Dijk, 1987). The construction of the mosque is presented as somewhat unlawful because they “have no planning application in place” (l. 18), and resistance to its construction is further apparent in the Newham council’s “concerns about traffic levels, land contamination and visual impact” (ll. 35-36). The idea of the mosque having a “visual impact” is similar to Richardson’s (2001) rejectionist discourse of spatial management where the increased visibility of a Muslim presence disrupts the imagined white-privileged national space that is conceived of as its own.

In the above discussion I have tried to show that an isolationist discourse which constructs Muslims as unwilling to contribute to British society is biased and inaccurate. At the same time though, the data revealed some variation in this regard. In extract 11 below, the argument that Muslims are not interested in participating at the national level is used again.

The approach used here however is less biased, and even critical of Muslims who are accused of too often assuming a “victim mentality” (ll. 27-28).

Extract 11

But there is a much bigger question at stake here: why is it that most British Muslims get so excited and aroused by foreign affairs, yet seem so bored by and uninterested in domestic politics and the economy?

From the march against the Iraq war in 2003 to the demonstrations against the Danish cartoons in 2006 and the protests against Israel's attack on Gaza in 2009, British Muslims have shown themselves perfectly willing to take to the streets to make their voices heard. But how many times have they, individually or collectively, joined rallies over issues that affect our daily lives: from the reforms of the NHS to the future of local schools; from the lack of social housing to rising energy bills and train fares?

[...]

It isn't just a combination of anti-terror laws and media demonisation that has hindered efforts at Muslim integration into mainstream British society. So, too, has the reluctance of many British Muslims to step outside the political comfort zone of the anti-war movement. When we only talk of foreign affairs, is it any wonder that we seem to come across as foreigners?

Muslims do not lack for opponents or antagonists; those who want to portray us as foreign, alien, un-British, are growing in number. We should not be handing them a club with which to beat us. In fact, the best way of overcoming Islamophobia and suspicion is for British Muslims to broaden, not narrow, our political horizons, to get involved in our local communities, to show our fellow citizens that we care not just about events in Palestine and Pakistan, but Portsmouth and Paisley too.

How can Muslims complain about our rights, our freedoms, our collective future, if we aren't engaged in the political process across the board as active British citizens? We have an obligation, as Britons and as Muslims, to fully participate in local and national debates and not to stand idly by.

We have allowed ourselves to be defined only by foreign policy and, in particular, by events in the Middle East for far too long. British Muslims can make a positive contribution to British society, but first we have to stop our navel-gazing and victim mentality. We must let the people, press and politicians of this country know that we are as British as we are Muslim, and we care about our shared future. (The Guardian, April 2, 2012).

In the extract it is suggested that British Muslims only show interest in foreign affairs, but not domestic issues. The author asks why British Muslims get “excited and aroused” (l. 2) by

foreign affairs, but seem “bored by and uninterested in domestic policies” (ll. 2-3). He gives foreign examples such as the Iraq war in 2003, the Danish cartoons in 2006, and Israel’s attack on Gaza in 2009, where British Muslims were “willing to take to the streets to make their voices heard” (ll. 6-7). Using a rhetorical question for effect, he asks how many times they have rallied for domestic issues such as the reforms of the NHS, the future of local schools, lack of social housing, rising energy bills, and train fares, all of which affect their daily lives.

Although the author in this extract acknowledges that “a combination of anti-terror laws and media demonisation” (l. 10) has made it difficult for Muslims to integrate into mainstream society, he asserts that Muslims are not entirely blameless. Muslims have shown a “reluctance” (l. 12) to step outside the “political comfort zone of the anti-war movement” (ll. 12-13), and the author asks if through a preoccupation with foreign affairs, “is it any wonder we seem to come across as foreigners?” (ll. 13-14). The author of this article is Muslim too and uses an inclusionary “we” and “us”. His Muslim identity appears to give his argument credibility. He reasons that Muslims do not lack “opponents or antagonists” (l. 15) who want to portray them as “foreign, alien, un-British” (l. 16) but if Muslims were to get involved in domestic politics, this would be one way of overcoming Islamophobia and suspicion. He then argues that Muslims cannot complain about “our rights, our freedoms, our collective future” (l. 21) if they are not actively participating as British citizens. They “have an obligation, as Britons and as Muslims, to fully participate in local and national debates” (ll. 23-24).

The idea of having an Islamic obligation to participate in society is shared by Ramadan (2004) who explains that Islam requires Muslims to engage, as equals, in an authentic dialogue with fellow citizens, working together towards mutual enrichment (Ramadan, 2004). The author of the above extract suggests that Muslims have not yet managed to achieve this, saying they need to stop “navel-gazing” (l. 27) which implies that they are inward looking. He also says they need to stop their “victim mentality” (ll. 27-28), and this is important because it acknowledges that Muslims have agency. Although they are subjected to external labelling and constructions they are able to have some influence on how they are defined.

When it comes to the formation of identity it is important to remember that processes underlying the construction of identity are not reliant on external labelling alone, but are also a consequence of individual agency (Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). Identity thus involves an internal definition where individuals define their own identity, and an external definition where they are defined by others (Jenkins, 2000; Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). This reflects the interplay between agency and structure (Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). Jenkins (2000) expands on this further by making a distinction between groups (internally defined) and categories (externally defined). Group identification and categorisation are interdependent – the concept of ‘us’ requiring a ‘them’, but in terms of power it is necessary to consider whose definition counts (Jenkins, 2000). As such, it is possible that externally imposed, racist categorisations are more influential in defining a person and governing how they interact with others (Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). For Muslims in Britain then, their reluctance to engage at the national level could be in reaction to the othering that they have experienced. And since there is a loop relationship between discourses and practices, the non-engagement by Muslims reproduces or legitimizes their othering.

British Muslims’ “navel-gazing”, and preferred interest in foreign affairs, could also be a reflection of the way in which processes of globalisation have exposed and contested the supposed unified and trans-historical boundaries of national identity (Hall, 1992, cited in Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). In Britain, globalisation processes such as migration have resulted in a significant part of the population having a migrant history. Immigration usually requires that individuals reconcile characteristics from their native culture with features from the local culture to which they have immigrated, thus creating a hybrid culture (Arnett, 2002). Often, individuals living in the host culture also come to adopt aspects from the immigrants’ culture, fusing them into their own identities (Arnett, 2002). This means that a unified or culturally pure national identity is difficult to sustain as elements from other cultures are invariably adopted (Arnett, 2002; Nazroo & Karlsen, 2003). Jacobson (1997) suggests that the boundaries of a religious identity are more clear and well-defined and this could account for why Muslims preferably choose to position themselves within their religious identity over national/cultural identities. And this universal, diasporic religious identity which they identify with more strongly could account for why they show more interest in foreign affairs affecting Muslims, rather than domestic issues.

4.4.2 Muslim women as oppressed. Another dominant discourse that was prevalent in the data was the treatment of Muslim women within Islam. In agreement with Fernandez (2009), analysis of the data revealed that the binary constructions of Islam and the West are mapped onto gender-based issues. Fernandez (2009) argues that Muslim women are often situated within the “matrix of conflicting morals, norms, values, religions, ideologies, politics and civilisations” (p. 270). Within the articles discussions around women often seemed to function to highlight the difference between British/Western values and Islamic values. This was often done through criticism of Islamic/Muslim practices. The extract below is one example. Here the concept of *sharia* law is drawn on again, but this time it is discussed within the context of Muslim women’s mistreatment/oppression.

Extract 12

Bill limiting sharia law is motivated by 'concern for Muslim women'

Lady Cox, the proposer, says aim is to prevent discrimination against Muslim women and 'jurisdiction creep' in Islamic tribunals

Islamic courts would be forced to acknowledge the primacy of English law under a bill being introduced in the House of Lords.

The bill, proposed by Lady Cox and backed by women's rights groups and the National Secular Society, was drawn up because of "deep concerns" that Muslim women are suffering discrimination within closed sharia law councils.

The Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill will introduce an offence carrying a five-year jail sentence for anyone falsely claiming or implying that sharia courts or councils have legal jurisdiction over family or criminal law. The bill, which will apply to all arbitration tribunals if passed, aims to tackle discrimination, which its supporters say is inherent in the courts, by banning the sharia practice of giving woman's testimony only half the weight of men's.

Cox said: "Equality under the law is a core value of British justice. My bill seeks to preserve that standard"

[...]

The tribunals should only be deciding civil disputes but two years ago the think-tank Civitas claimed sharia courts, some 85 of which operate in Birmingham, London, Bradford and Manchester, had crossed the proper limits of their jurisdiction and were regularly giving illegal advice on marriage and divorce.

Cox said they are increasingly ruling on family and criminal cases, including child custody and domestic violence. Jurisdiction "creep" had caused considerable suffering among women compelled to return to abusive husbands, or to give up children and property.

Diana Nammi, of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, said: "Women and children are very vulnerable members of the community and under sharia law they become invisible. Women and children are the most vulnerable in minority communities where religion tradition and culture has become the identity taking precedence over the human rights and women's rights that are protected under civil, UK law."

The bill requires public bodies to inform women they have fewer legal rights if their marriage is unrecognised in English law. Cox said she had found "considerable evidence" of women, some of whom are brought to Britain speaking little English and kept ignorant of their legal rights, suffering domestic violence or unequal access to divorce, due to discriminatory decisions made. "We cannot continue to condone this situation. Many women say: 'We came to this country to escape these practices only to find the situation is worse here.' "

Cox said she would be asking the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who caused a row last year when he said a recognised role for sharia law seemed unavoidable, to back her bill. She said: "By appearing to condone this inherent discrimination system which is causing real suffering to women, he has failed to recognise that suffering. He is appearing to forward the acceptability and validity of Sharia law in this country."

Aina Khan, a solicitor who advises on sharia law, said: "It is good in parts. I would like to see best practice in sharia councils, like in the Beth Din model and I would like some legislation. I don't want somebody opening up a sharia board in their front room. Of course sex discrimination laws must apply. But there are some alarmist tones in the bill. Where she goes wrong is assuming that some sort of misogyny and discrimination goes on. Eighty per cent of its users are women."

Khurshid Drabu, adviser on constitutional affairs to the Muslim Council of Britain, said: "Bills of this kind don't help anybody. They don't appear to understand that we live in a free country where people can make free choices. Yet again, it appears to be a total misunderstanding of the concept that underpins these arbitration councils. Sharia councils operate under consent. If there is a woman who suffers as a result of a decision by one of these councils a woman is free to go to the British courts." (The Guardian, June 8, 2011).

When looking at news articles such as the above, it is apparent that the crux of a news event is presented through the use of a headline and/or lead sentence (Teo, 2000). These often function to predetermine a reader's processing of the text (Teo, 2000). The headline for this article suggests that a proposed bill to limit *sharia* law is motivated by a "concern for Muslim

women” (l. 1). The lead sentence then elaborates that the aim is to “prevent discrimination against Muslim women” (l. 2). A reading of the article would thus begin with the assumption that *sharia* law results in the unfair treatment of women. Furthermore, the words “jurisdiction creep” (l. 3) in the lead sentence suggest an infringement by Islamic courts within the legal sphere, adding to the inference that *sharia* law is something negative.

The article then goes on to establish the superiority of English law. It begins by asserting that the proposed bill will force Islamic courts to “acknowledge the primacy of English law” (l. 4). In Britain, English law would legally take precedence, but the use of the word “primacy” suggests a belief in the superiority of British values over Islamic values regardless of national context. This is supported by the fact that *sharia* courts are then constructed as inherently discriminatory toward women. The article uses a predication strategy (Richardson, 2007) whereby *sharia* is personified and assigned human qualities. For example, *sharia* courts “had crossed” (l. 19) and “were regularly giving illegal advice” (ll. 19-20). This functions to distance blame away from any specific individual or group. Since *sharia* law originates from Islamic practice, however, blame is implicitly present. Moreover, the lack of distinction between *sharia* law and those individuals who cross the limits of their jurisdiction presents a biased view against *sharia* law as a whole, rather than attributing blame to the specific individuals who may be abusing it.

The article positions Muslim women as “very vulnerable” (l. 26) and “invisible” (l. 27) under *sharia* law. *Sharia* courts are purported to cause Muslim women “considerable suffering” (l. 22), forcing them to return to “abusive husbands, or to give up children and property” (ll. 23-24). There is no evidence given of cases to support this, however. The proposer of the bill, Cox, is also vague about where these “deep concerns” (l. 7) over *sharia* law are coming from, relying on the evidence of “women” (l. 33) and “many women” (l. 36) without being specific. Cox refers to *sharia* law as an “inherent discrimination system” (ll. 40-41) and appears to criticise the Archbishop of Canterbury’s tolerance and recognition of the role *sharia* law has in Britain. By suggesting that *sharia* law has no “acceptability” or “validity” (l. 42) in Britain, Cox contributes to the idea that Islamic values are oppressive, inferior, and not welcome in Britain.

According to Fernandez (2009), where religious practices are conceptualised as oppressive, this obscures racist binaries and feeds into an idea that equality and freedom are “the sole preserve of the West” (p. 271). Underlying this idea is an Orientalist approach that narrowly defines and interprets Islam through a Western lens. The extract above mentions the *sharia* practice of having a woman’s testimony weigh half that of a man’s. This ruling has resulted in a lot of criticism directed at women’s status in Islam (Walker, 2009). The interpretation of a woman’s testimony having half the value of a man’s originates from the verse:

“O you who believe! When you deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time reduce them to writing (...) And get two witnesses, out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as you choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her (2: 282).

This verse has been critically interpreted to mean that women are considered legally and socially inferior and more prone to forgetfulness (Walker, 2009). Walker (2009) argues that this interpretation ignores both context, and the narrow application of the verse to testimony that is related to “transactions involving future obligations” (i.e. financial credit). When it comes to testimony regarding other matters no distinction is made between male and female witnesses. For example, in relation to adultery, gender indifference regarding witnesses is evident: “And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, flog each of them with eighty stripes” (24: 4). Walker (2009) explains that two female witnesses are only required when looking at testimony regarding financial matters, and then too only for corroboration. To understand why, it is important to look at context. In pre-Islamic Arabia, men were primarily involved with financial dealings, whereas women were consigned to the domestic sphere (Walker, 2009). This means women would have less experience with, and exposure to, financial matters. The above depiction of *sharia* law therefore indicates a lack of effort to understand it within a socio-cultural context.

Towards the end of the article there is variation introduced with a counter-argument provided by Khan, a solicitor who advises on *sharia* law. Mentioning her law occupation is a referential technique that draws attention to her social category (Richardson, 2007). As a solicitor, her opinion on law matters would carry weight. Khan mentions the “alarmist” (l. 47) tones in the bill and asserts that it is wrong to assume that discrimination takes place. She

says eighty per cent of users are women. This use of statistics also gives authority to a claim as numbers are seen to stand objectively and are taken as factual (Waidzunus, 2005). This balancing information comes at the end however, and Teo (2000) argues that the heading and lead sentence already biases the reader toward a particular reading.

4.4.3 The veil and/or headscarf. Another gender-based issue that is more commonly drawn on in relation to Muslim women is their clothing and what it symbolises. The data revealed that discussions surrounding Muslim women are often centred on their dress or appearance, with the focus usually on the veil or headscarf. These items of clothing were found to be variously constructed as symbolic of oppression, Islamist extremism, cultural or religious expression, and a barrier/resistance to integration. Before discussing the discourses related to the veil/headscarf, and how these contribute to the construction of Muslims, closer consideration is given below to the different terms drawn on in relation to the veil/headscarf.

When discussing the practice of covering, the articles drew on terms such as '*hijab*', '*niqab*', '*burqa*', 'veil' and 'headscarf'. The '*niqab*', '*burqa*' and 'veil' were mostly used in allusion to clothing that included the covering of the face, while '*hijab*' and 'headscarf' were often used synonymously to mean a head covering. The use of different terms for the veil/headscarf indicates a postmodern shift in meaning. At the same time though, I argue that the use reflects an Orientalising approach. In the *Qur'an*, the words "*khimar*" (24: 31) and "*jilbab*" (33: 59) meaning 'headscarf' and 'outer garment or cloak' respectively, are used for the prescription of modest dress. The word '*hijab*' means to conceal, to veil, to hinder and to separate, and while it is used as a noun in the *Qur'an*, it is not used in reference to women's clothing (Amer, 2000; Ruby, 2006). One of the uses of the word *hijab* is in reference to a screen (33: 53) behind which male Muslims were to address the Prophet Muhammad's wives (Sechzer, 2004). This understanding of the term *hijab* is important because it indicates that it has an Islamic association that does not simply equate to a veil or headscarf (Ruby, 2006). *Hijab* is a broader concept that includes modest dress, but also behaviour and interaction with the opposite sex. Today, however, the word *hijab* is narrowly used, usually in reference to clothing only. It is also manifest in multiple ways. For example, a Saudi woman might wear a *niqab*, an Iranian woman a *chador*, and a Canadian woman a headscarf (each reflecting

different cultural codes of dress), and all three might identify their dress as *hijab* (Ruby, 2006).

The media's usage of the terms often brushes over the complexity of the practice of covering up by Muslims, or functions to activate a particular image (Ruby, 2006). The use of 'veil' or 'headscarf' in reference to all head, face and body coverings leads to the erasure of cultural and ethnic differences (Ruby, 2006). Even when different terms are used, Ruitenburg (2008) argues that they are already historically, culturally and politically marked. For example, the word 'scarf' is trivial, signifying nothing more than a piece of cloth, but the words *hijab* and 'veil' "religionizes" it (Ruitenburg, 2008, p. 24). This then has implications for how the wearer is perceived. In the discussions that follow, for ease of reading, I use the same terms employed by each article.

Extract 13 is from an article looking at the practice of veiling by British women, in light of the French *niqab* ban.

Extract 13

In some ways, they were like any other young women, waiting at the bus stop for the 25 to Ilford, clutching their mobile phones and small bottles of water. But thanks to Europe's most controversial item of millinery, you could see nothing of Muna Jama and her friend but their eyes.

This was the week that France banned the *niqab*, the Islamic full-face veil. The law's principal author called it a way to "eradicate [a] minority of fundamentalists" who "instrumentalise Islam for political reasons." President Nicolas Sarkozy said the *niqab* was "a sign of debasement and subservience;" for another minister, it was a male-imposed "prison." But is any of that true? (The Daily Telegraph, April 16, 2011).

The extract begins by describing two young Muslim women in London. By beginning with the words "in some ways, they were like any other young women" (l. 1), there is already a suggestion of difference. They are not the same in 'all' ways. A commonplace scene of young girls waiting for the bus, mobile phones and small bottles of water in hand is given. Using the conjunction "but" (l. 2) to start his next sentence, the author gives emphasis to what

he says next: “But thanks to Europe’s most controversial item of millinery” (ll. 2-3), nothing is visible of the girls except their eyes. The words “thanks to” suggest satire, reflecting the opinion of the author. He then brings attention to how the face veil has become a contentious issue by using an extreme case formulation: “Europe’s most controversial item”, but then undermines or makes light of the significance of this issue by referring to it as an “item of millinery”. Comparing the veil to a woman’s hat, something considered ordinary, reflects a somewhat dismissive attitude toward the controversy surrounding the face veil.

The extract then outlines the reasons given for the *niqab* (face veil) ban in France. The veil is associated with Islamic fundamentalism where religion is used as a tool, and banning it is seen as way to get rid of a “minority of fundamentalists” (l. 6). This not only creates an association between women who veil and religious fundamentalism, but also suggests that they are not wanted in France. The other reason for the ban draws on the interpretation of the *niqab* as a sign of misogynistic oppression. The French president calls the *niqab* a sign of “debasement and subservience” (l. 8) suggesting that this practice is humiliating for women and positions them as subordinate to men. A minister also describes it as a “male-imposed ‘prison’” (ll. 8-9), suggesting again that it is restrictive and enforced by patriarchy. Even though this article quotes the French president and a minister, despite their social position, their words are undermined by the tone the author takes. He follows their reasoning with a rhetorical “But is any of that true?” (l. 9) indicating skepticism toward their reasoning for the ban.

While the extract above indicates incredulity toward taking the veil as a symbol of extremism or patriarchal oppression, extract 14 below indicates that the veil is an item that can reflect male dominance. It shows that issues regarding women are often accompanied by discussions on their dress or appearance. This in turn suggests that bigotry toward women is sometimes disguised through rhetoric that calls on the religious practice of veiling. Drawing on the Islamic principles of modesty to subjugate women is also indicative of the conflation of culture and religion.

Extract 14

Despite the slow change, there is still significant resistance to the girls' basketball within Nagpada. Clerics regularly criticise the players in sermons.

In the Zulfiqar restaurant, only a few metres from the training ground, the owner, Abdul Haq, said it was wrong that girls played basketball. "They should be indoors or at school at that age. It's not the right activity for them," he said.

Ali Hassan, a 34-year-old medical technician, said there was nothing wrong with girls playing basketball but they should be "properly dressed". He suggested a full head-to-toe veil. Zulfiqar Haidar, a cobbler, thought that given the demands of the sport, some kind of adapted dress which would allow the girls to see would be preferable – though "definitely no shorts and no exposed hair".

For Noor Khan and the club's other organisers, however, the immediate problem is not social, but financial. (The Guardian, November 18, 2011).

The extract presents a discussion around a group of Muslim female basketball players in India. There is "significant resistance" (l. 1) to their basketball, and clerics "regularly criticise" (l. 2) them in sermons. This suggests a deeply conservative community. The opinion of the restaurant owner, Abdul Haq, reflects a view that girls have a defined role or place in society. He says that they "should be indoors or at school at that age" (ll. 4-5). He also remarks that basketball "is not the right activity for them" (l. 5), which indicates some bigotry toward women. Another community member, Ali Hassan, a medical technician, sees nothing wrong with the girls playing basketball. Hassan does, however, believe that they should be "properly dressed" (l. 7), and suggests a "full head-to-toe veil" (ll. 7-8). The impracticality of playing basketball dressed in a full head-to-toe veil, suggests that even if basketball is acceptable for women it is not going to be facilitated. When looking at the word "veil" here, it seems inaccurate as it usually denotes a face/head covering, rather than a garment that covers the entire body, such as the *burqa*. This indicates how the term is used loosely to cover a range of styles. The opinion of Zulfiqar Haidar, a cobbler, introduces some variation. He is quoted as saying that there should be "no shorts and no exposed hair" (l. 10), but he acknowledges that the sport would require some sort of "adapted dress", and this would be "preferable" (l. 9). As such, he holds on to the principle of religious dress, but proposes a flexible approach where their mode of dressing can be adapted. He also does not disapprove of the girls playing basketball.

When looking at the above extract, it is important to consider the cultural context and the influence this would have on women's experience. Nagpada is a community in Mumbai, India, and it is implied that it is a poor, conservative and patriarchal society. The idea of context and social position influencing the meaning attached to the veil can be explained using Anthia's (2009) translocational positionality. Anthias (2009) explains that identity should be considered in terms of context and the categorical organization of boundaries and hierarchies. This means that identity categories are often taken as bounded, and depending on the context, these categories are arranged hierarchically. For example, in the extract gender boundaries appear well defined. This is evident from the discussions around what are appropriate activities and dress for women. In terms of hierarchy, it appears to be a patriarchal society and this is reflected in the resistance toward girls playing basketball. The Nagpada location/context could therefore be one wherein women have a lower social position, and their experience of their female identity and the practice of veiling might be one of oppression.

While extract 14 shows that the practice of veiling can be interpreted as oppressive, in extract 15 that follows, the *hijab* is taken as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism. The extract is from an article looking at a trend towards religiosity among wealthy women in Pakistan.

Extract 15

"I started reading the Qur'an properly and praying five times a day. No one made me wear the hijab. That would be impossible," she laughs brightly. "I showed the way to the other girls at work."

They are not alone. Though there are no statistics and most evidence is anecdotal, a new wave of interest in more conservative strands of Islam among wealthier and better educated women in Pakistan appears clear.

It is part of a broader cultural and religious shift seen in the country over decades but which observers say has accelerated in the past 10 years.

"The other girls who were working with us left." Shumaila said. "They found the new environment a bit unfriendly."

One indication of the trend is the growing proportion of women within the conservative religious political organisation Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). (The Guardian, April 9, 2012).

In the extract, Shumaila mentions how she “started reading the Quran properly and praying five times a day” (l. 1). She asserts that no one made her wear the *hijab* and it is implied that this practice is in fulfilment of a religious obligation. This interest in religion is constructed as a trend however, and Shumaila says “I showed the way to the other girls at work” (ll. 2-3), which sounds like she set a precedent. The extract goes on to explain that this trend or interest in religion is evident “among wealthier and better educated women in Pakistan” (ll. 5-6). The extract mentions how this interest is a “new wave of interest in more conservative strands of Islam” (l. 5). It is also part of a wider “cultural and religious shift” (l. 7) which has “accelerated” (l. 8) over the last ten years. The words “new wave” and “accelerated” suggest the extent and speed of this trend is significant. The extract then hints at this trend being a concern when it quotes Shumaila as saying that other girls left work because the “new environment” was “a bit unfriendly” (ll. 9-10); the new environment presumably being a conservative Islamic one.

This trend is visible in the increasing proportion of women found in the “conservative religious political organisation Jamaat-e-Islami” (l. 12). Here, the rhetoric of the *hijab* as a symbol of Islamic fundamentalism is drawn on. Franks (2000) explains that *hijab* is often taken as a signifier for initiation into Islamist groups. Women are more easily identifiable through dress, and as such they are given an emblematic status that confirms the Islamification of a group (Franks, 2000). This is apparent in the same article which continues:

Extract 16

Jl, like its counterparts elsewhere in the Islamic world, has traditionally recruited among the lower middle class, swollen in recent decades in Pakistan by rapid urbanisation and economic growth. But the new wave of devotion is now touching the elite in a new way. Al-Huda (The Guidance), an organisation set up in 1994 to spread a new and often rigorous piety among Pakistani women, has gained a foothold among the upper reaches of society.

The group, which critics accuse of encouraging intolerant strands of Islam influenced by those practised in Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, has grown from an initial single small centre in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, to a presence in every city, and is expanding among the Pakistani diaspora abroad. (The Guardian, April 9, 2012).

In the extract, Al Huda is described as an organisation that aims to spread a “new and often rigorous piety among Pakistani women” (l. 5), and it has been accused of promoting “intolerant strands of Islam” (l. 7). If the words “rigorous piety” and “intolerant” are associated with extremism, then the fact that the group has a “foothold” (l. 5) among prominent classes of society, and is present in every city could elicit concern. This is because the group will have influential backing and widespread influence. More alarming though, would be the idea that the group’s presence is expanding among the Pakistani “diaspora abroad” (l. 10). Diasporic communities often share a religious identity that surpasses geographic borders (Palmer, 2000). Historically they also undergo political struggles to define identity in a context of displacement (Howard, 2000). With a large number of British Muslims being of South Asian origin, and mostly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent (Ansari, 2002), the presence of a diasporic Muslim community in Britain could be perceived as threatening.

The following extract also suggests that the idea of a diasporic Muslim community with traditionalist or strict religious practices is a real possibility and threat in Britain.

Extract 17

The vast majority of Tower Hamlets Muslims are originally from Bangladesh, an overwhelmingly Muslim country. But the niqab, a Saudi garment, is almost completely unknown there. In supposedly backward, monocultural Dhaka, the capital, you will never see it on the streets. In supposedly liberal, multicultural London, I saw perhaps twenty niqabi women in half an hour.

"I grew up in what people would call a Muslim ghetto, in Rochdale," says Haras Rafiq, director of the moderate Muslim think-tank Centri. "I never even saw a niqab until I was 19. They have grown enormously."

Tower Hamlets is headquarters to a particularly pernicious form of Islamic radicalism. Over us in the Whitechapel Road towered the East London Mosque, funded by Saudi Arabia and controlled by the hardline Islamic Forum of Europe, accused by the local Labour MP of infiltrating his party to further its declared goal of a sharia state in Europe.

[...]

Yet it is still too simplistic to say, as the French have done, that niqab-wearer equals Islamist radical. Many of the niqabi women we spoke to did feel that Islam was under

attack – a key element of the Islamist worldview. But this did not usually translate into political activism. "It was not a political thing at all," said one woman. "It was personal." Surprisingly, some of the niqabi women we spoke to did not even go to the mosque. None said they were members of any organisation or group. At best, the niqab is a symptom, not a cause. (The Daily Telegraph, April 16, 2011).

Here, a diasporic Muslim Bangladeshi community living in London is looked at. The author describes the *niqab* as a "Saudi garment" (l. 2) that is "almost completely unknown" (ll. 2-3) in Bangladesh. In London, within half an hour, he saw about "twenty niqabi women" (l. 5) wearing it. This practice of Bangladeshi women living in London wearing a Saudi garment is indicative of the postmodern processes of cultural hybridity. *Niqabs* are then described as having "grown enormously" (l. 8) in London, and this personification of the veil as growing, assigns the object importance. The extract also identifies Tower Hamlets and a ghetto in Rochdale as Muslim spaces. Tower Hamlets is described as the "headquarters to a particularly pernicious form of Islamic radicalism" (l. 9). This can be construed as a threat, particularly because it is a space within Britain. The extract draws on threatening imagery by using words like "pernicious", describing the mosque as towering, and linking the mosque to Saudi Arabia which is often associated with hardline, literalist movements. As in extract 16 above, extract 17 also draws on the rhetoric of conservative, traditionalist organisations as a threat. Here, accusations are made by a local MP that the Islamic Forum of Europe wants to establish a *sharia* state in Europe.

Although the mention of radicalism and threats to Europe takes place within an article of the *niqab*, the practice of veiling is not always directly implicated with fundamentalism or Islamist extremism. As the article continues, the extract above indicates that wearing the *niqab* does not equate to being a radical Islamist. It also shows that wearing the *niqab* can be a "personal" (l. 18) decision that does not suggest belonging to a political organisation. Interestingly, while trying to dispel misconceptions, the author found it surprising that some of the women who wear the *niqab* "did not even go to the mosque" (ll. 19-20). This indicates a misunderstanding of Islam as attendance at the mosque is compulsory for men, but optional for women (Al-Johar, 2005). Non-attendance is therefore not that unusual. Notably, the extract ends with the *niqab* being called a "symptom" (l. 21) at best of radical Islamism. This

suggests that while there is no direct link, there is still an association between the *niqab* and radical Islamism. Even though the veil is not directly constructed as problematic, discourses related to fundamentalism and extremism are included within the article.

4.4.3.1 Hijab and agency. From the above discussions two broad themes can be delineated: Muslim women who wear the veil and/or headscarf are paradoxically depicted as either passive victims of an oppressive culture/religion, or they are depicted as an active threat to Western society and culture (Bilge, 2010). Where veiling is equated with oppression, the veil is taken as a sign of subjugation and whether women wear it through consent or force, does not appear to change its meaning (Bilge, 2010). Where the veil is constructed as a sign of resistance, or a threat, Bilge (2010) calls this “instrumentalist reductionism” (p. 20) whereby the motivation and the outcome of veiling are amalgamated. In this way the reasons for veiling are ignored, and the focus is on the outcome or effect that the veil has. These two readings of veiled Muslim women cast them as devoid of agency. The data, however, did reveal variation in the construction/positioning of Muslim women. In extract 18 below, we see multiple reasons given for the veil, with the women constructed as having agency. They also attribute different meanings to the veil.

Extract 18

"I used to go clubbing, I used to drink, I used to wear skinny jeans," said Ms Jama, who is 28 and from Barking. "But I just got thinking it wasn't right. I had lots of men and I never got anything out of it. They would use me and then leave me. They would look at me like a piece of meat, and this [the niqab] stops all that.

"It is hard in other ways. I live near Essex, and people are sometimes hostile. But it's still better. It gives me confidence."

Ms Jama's friend, who did not want to be named, said: "We do it because there's a higher reward. There's a lot of things [Islamic obligations] we're not capable of doing but we can do this."

Many of the women insisted that wearing the veil was an act not of repression but of self-assertion. "I am doing it to assert my identity as a Muslim," said another young woman, Karima. "My parents hate it, actually. My father keeps threatening to throw me out." I got a strong sense that for at least some of them it was part of finding an identity in the same way that a white teenager might dye her hair or become a goth. (The Daily Telegraph, April 16, 2011).

In extract 18, it is shown that women wear the veil as an act of assertion, or to control how others perceive, or behave towards them. Ms Jama's reason for veiling indicates that the presence of the veil stopped men from looking at her "like a piece of meat" (l. 4). She also suggests that it transformed her sense of self (Tarlo, 2007), when she says that despite hostility from people, wearing the veil "gives [her] confidence" (l. 6). Ms Jama's friend offers a different reason for veiling, saying that they do it "because there's a higher reward" (ll. 7-8). There is mention here that the veil is an "Islamic obligation" (l. 8), which they are capable of fulfilling. The young woman Karima wears the veil to assert her identity as a Muslim, and her testament that her parents "hate it" (l. 12), and her father threatens "to throw [her] out" (ll. 12-13) subverts the stereotype of the veil as a symbol of patriarchal oppression. The author of the article also suggests that veiling is "part of finding an identity" (ll. 13-14) akin to dyeing your hair or becoming a goth. This idea of the veil/hijab being used to formulate an identity is also evident in the extract below.

Extract 19

But Sarsour believes she can embody her two identities: that of a Muslim of Palestinian descent, and that of an American woman born and bred in Brooklyn. "My American side marries my Palestinian side well. Americans in general, we are very steadfast people, we know what we want, we get what we want. My American side makes me fearless."

Which is perhaps why Sarsour's ambitions lie beyond the AAANY. She has already flung herself into local Democratic politics by organising voter drives in Brooklyn. She believes that through hard work and campaigning she can persuade not only the Muslim Americans of Bay Ridge to vote for her, but also the rest of the community: the Italian Americans, the Irish Americans and the Russians. Anyone, really, regardless of faith. She aims to stand for office one day, wearing her hijab. "I care about affordable housing, I care about bus routes, I care about small business, I care about schools. These are not Muslim issues. Even protection of civil rights – that's not just a Muslim issue. That is for everyone."

Ten years after 9/11, perhaps one of the least expected outcomes of that terrible day will be a headscarf-wearing Arab American woman hitting the streets of Brooklyn and asking her fellow citizens for their votes. (The Guardian, September 5, 2011).

In extract 19 Sarsour is a "headscarf-wearing Arab American woman" (l. 16), embodying two identities. As an American woman Sarsour shows that she is well integrated into American

society, having “flung herself into local Democratic politics” (l. 7) and relating her desire to run for office one day. At the same time though, she is a Muslim of Palestinian descent, and wears a headscarf. While Sarsour’s ambition and actions show that her national identity as an American are important, her headscarf equally serves as an important marker of her religious and ethnic identity. As such, the headscarf allows Sarsour to maintain her concurrent identities.

4.4.3.2 Overlooking women’s agency.

Although the data showed that Muslim women can be positioned as having agency, for the most part it is suggested that this agency is overlooked. As the discussions above indicated, the veil/headscarf is often taken as symbolic of women’s oppression by Islamic patriarchy, and in Western countries this oppression is considered incompatible with Western values and national character (Bilge, 2010). Ironically, where effort is made to counter gender discrimination against Muslim women, such as banning the veil, discrimination is itself achieved (Fernandez, 2009). This is because on the grounds of their sex, Muslim women’s autonomy is not recognised, and they are unable to freely practice their religion in the same way that Muslim men can. It could therefore be argued that the focus on minority gender relations obscures forms of oppression that occur on a majority-minority level through social divisions such as nation, class or race, and they further obscure how “assumptions about gender are racialised and how cultural othering is modulated by gender” (Bilge, 2010, p. 18). Therefore by focusing on one subordinating practice, such as Muslim sexism, other existing hierarchies are maintained (Bilge, 2010). These hierarchies include cultural hierarchies where for example British/Western societies are considered liberal with regard to women, whereas Islamic societies are considered inherently sexist. This conflation of Islam with culture however, contributes to the further marginalisation of women.

Extract 20 below offers some insight into how the overlooking of Muslim women’s agency can be frustrating for them because it leads to their marginalisation and denies them the ability to contribute to society. In the extract Tehmina Kazi expresses frustration at the stereotyping of Muslim women as oppressed. Her views are echoed by Sarah Khan who finds it “patronising” (l. 19) to say that “Muslim women are oppressed or don’t contribute” (l. 19). Kazi finds that this perception of Muslim women is manifest in “the media preoccupation

with the hijab” (ll. 22-23). This close association made between Muslim women and articles of clothing is evident in Kazi’s own experience. As director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, Kazi seeks to challenge Islamic extremism. She is one of a “small but growing number of British Muslim women” (l. 9) doing so. This indicates that there are Muslim women who are participating in British society, actively addressing issues that affect them. For this though, Kazi been “labelled a whore, admonished for not wearing the hijab and accused, inaccurately, of wearing short skirts by people she has never met” (ll. 2-4). Kazi goes on to say “They always talk about what you wear” (l. 14), and later relates how she tired of the media obsession surrounding the *hijab* and stopped wearing it. Discussing women within the context of clothing alone is a reductive, essentialising approach. As the extract indicates, Muslim women have the potential to contribute to society, but their efforts are undermined or overshadowed by discourses fixated on their dress.

Extract 20

Tehmina Kazi wears modest western dress and believes in plurality and diversity within her faith, Islam. For her pains, she has been labelled a whore, admonished for not wearing the hijab and accused, inaccurately, of wearing short skirts by people she has never met, writing online.

When she defended Usama Hasan, the London imam who faced death threats and was suspended from Leyton mosque last month after he said evolution was compatible with Islam, she had to go to police after receiving threats of her own.

Despite this, Kazi, the director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, remains defiant in her role as one of the small but growing number of British Muslim women challenging and combating Islamic extremism. Campaigning against any extremism is not for the faint-hearted, but for Muslim women it requires a special kind of resolve. "It takes a lot more courage to do this if you're a woman because the type of criticism you get is very different," she says, highlighting the personal nature of the abuse. "They always talk about what you wear."

Kazi believes women should be free to wear whatever they choose – it is stereotypes about Muslim women that she aims to confront.

....

These views are echoed by Sara Khan who set up Inspire two years ago because she felt there was no organisation helping Muslim women to achieve their potential. "It's quite patronising. To say Muslim women are oppressed or don't contribute is just so patronising – no community wants to be stereotyped."

Khan makes no attempt to hide her frustration as she rails against the wider perception of Muslim women, which, for her, manifests itself in the media preoccupation with the hijab. Khan wore the hijab for 15 years before she tired of the "obsession" surrounding it. Despite Khan's frustration at stereotyping, she is not blind to the fact that not all Muslim women have had the same freedom and opportunities as she has, recognising that there are "Muslim women not allowed to go out of the house". (The Guardian, April 29, 2011).

In the extract it is acknowledged by Kazi that there are Muslim women being oppressed, who don't have "the same freedom and opportunities as she has" (l. 25), but her frustration is directed at the perception that all Muslim women are oppressed. The oppression of women is not necessarily rooted within the Islamic tradition. Esposito (2002) points out that historically the revelation of Islam raised the status of women by abolishing female infanticide that was practiced at the time, abolishing women's status as property, and establishing their legal capacity, right to receive their own dowry, and control over their property (Esposito, 2002). He also points out that in the *Qur'an* men and women are discussed as created to be equal parts of a pair (51:49). Men are not taken as superior; instead God's expressed preference for individuals in the *Qur'an* is based on a person's faith, not their gender (Esposito, 2002). Islam, however, has become established in societies that have long been patriarchal, and Islamic laws and *Qur'anic* verses were interpreted by men. The oppression of women is therefore not inherent to Islam, but is instead a result of societal and cultural practices. Where Muslim women are today struggling to attain their rights within their own communities, this is no different to women's liberation struggles that have taken place in the West. Depicting their oppression as inherent to Islam, only serves to stereotype Muslims in a negative way.

Kundnani (2007) points out that there is no great difference between Muslim and non-Muslim women's oppression, and in effect, the intent focus on Islam allows for other communities to conceal their own oppressive practices. Extract 21 below offers more of an indication on how gender issues are stereotypically depicted as 'Muslim issues' in the media.

Extract 21

Atakav said the course would be an important way of changing perceptions of Islam. Study materials include films and TV programmes from around the world, including Iran, the US, Turkey and China. "We will look at how the media talk about 'honour'-based violence, for example. If it's a Middle Eastern woman who happens also to be a Muslim woman it's called an 'honour crime'. But if it's a British woman who was killed because her husband was jealous because she was having an affair with another man, it's called murder.

"These crimes happen everywhere in the world, it's not just a Muslim, or just a Middle Eastern thing." (The Guardian, January 19, 2012).

The extract looks at how honour-based violence is labelled differently according to ethnicity/religious identity. If a Muslim Middle Eastern woman is killed it is called an "honour crime" (l. 5), but if a British woman is killed it is called murder. The exclusive use of the term "honour crime" for Muslims, suggests that this is a practice that Muslims alone carry out, yet it is no different to the violence carried out against women in other parts of the world. This follows Kundnani's (2007) argument that episodes of domestic violence in British society receive less media attention than the honour killings carried out by Muslims. While it is correct to expose the justifications (i.e. honour) that Muslim men use to legitimise violence, this should not be done in way that depicts the fight against Muslim gender violence as a fight against culture or religion, while combatting violence against non-Muslims is seen as a fight for rights (Kundnani, 2007). Depicting Muslim women's oppression as uniquely derived from Islam, counter-poses a religion against global systems and structures and Shaheed (2002) explains that this impedes an understanding of structural inequalities, belittles the efforts of those trying to execute change in their societies, and clouds the different political and social forces that are often in conflict within particular countries or regions. It also serves to stereotype Muslims in a negative way, which places Muslims as a whole on the defensive, inhibiting the potential for self-critical analysis which would otherwise lead to growth and change (Shaheed, 2002).

4.4.4 Identity, visibility and integration. The above discussions show that the veil is still discussed within discourses of female oppression, and religious or political fundamentalism. In addition to this, the analysis of the data also revealed that the

veil/headscarf is often discussed in relation to identity, visibility and integration. The headscarf/veil is constructed as symbolic of Muslim women's inability to integrate/be integrated. Notably, discourses of identity, visibility and integration mostly alluded to Muslim women and not men. From this it could possibly be argued that women's bodies are designated as a "key battle site of cultural imperialism" (Fernandez, 2009, p. 272). Women are believed to have an important role in the biological reproduction of members of nations and ethnic groups, and traditionally they are held as responsible for the socialisation of the young (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989, cited in Moghadam, 1999). This marks women's bodies as transmitters of culture, traditions, and symbols of community (Moghadam, 1999). This idea of women as a signifier of culture is rooted in "colonial imaginings of the female Other's body" and continues to inform contemporary "western responses to the practices of the Other" (Fernandez, 2009, p. 272). Looked at another way, dress is a cultural phenomenon that signifies belonging to a particular group, and simultaneously differentiates an individual from others (Barnes & Eicher, 1997). This means that dress as a signifier has the ability to include and exclude, and therefore plays a role in the contestation and negotiation of identity (Dwyer, 1999).

In the extracts that follow the idea of women as signifiers of culture is evident, and so is the idea of the veil/headscarf as a visible marker of difference. The extracts look at the veil/headscarf in the context of the French ban on veiling in public. This news coverage by British newspapers on the ban in France mostly appears neutral, and at times sympathetic toward Muslim women. For the most part though, it would appear that coverage of the ban publicises the practice of *hijab* and for the British public this could function to highlight the 'otherness' of Muslim women.

As discussed in the literature review, national identity is no longer based on an unchanging singular ethnicity, but is rather based on values and cultural similarity (Kundnani, 2007). In France, the idea of secularism is central to French culture and society (Ardizzoni, 2004). Secularism restricts religion to the private sphere with the aim of constructing a more equitable society, and therefore observable displays of religion are rejected (Ardizzoni, 2004). Muslim women's decision to wear the veil/headscarf distances them from the

mainstream culture, and is therefore perceived as a contestation against a “national identity based on secularism and assimilation” (Ardizzoni, 2004, p. 638).

According to van Dijk (1997), debates around integration and assimilation can be taken as features of racist rhetoric. In their study on acculturation, Bowskill et al. (2007) found that integration was often used synonymously with “a privileging of assimilative outcomes” (p. 805). Integration would thus mean a minimisation of difference between groups through conformity to mainstream values (Bowskill et al., 2007). When looking at the integration of Muslims, assimilation is often implemented through measures such as the altering of citizenship laws, compulsory language and civics tests for citizenship applicants, codes of conduct for trustees of mosques, and cultural codes of conduct for Muslim women (Fekete, 2004). Legislation that aims to assimilate racial others is also characteristic of what Lentin (2007) calls the racist state. In the extracts below, the drive towards assimilation is evident in France’s banning of the veil, and secularist rhetoric.

Extract 22

Why are record numbers of French people now voting Front National?

"Fear," he says with a sigh. "People are afraid of everything. There has been a banking crisis, a financial crisis, an economic crisis, a social crisis, a geostrategic crisis and an environmental crisis.

"That's considerable in a country that's used to being protected. But the Front National doesn't have any answers."

Copé claims the UMP's best tactic is "solutions" such as the niqab ban. It's about women's rights and the notion of living together, he argues. "If you meet a woman in a burqa, she can't reply to your smile. It's a denial of identity." (The Guardian, March 24, 2011).

In the extract above, French politician Copé, in discussing his party’s loss to the Front National party, explains that France has been through so many crises that its people are now fearful of “everything” (l. 2). Copé then says that the *niqab* ban is one of his party’s best tactical “solutions” (l. 7) to these fears, implying that the *niqab* is something that was feared, or symbolic of something threatening. He also refers to women’s rights, and the “notion of

living together” (l. 8), indicating a perception of the *niqab* as oppressive and as a barrier to interaction and coexistence. Copé is then ambiguous when he says that a woman in a *burqa* “can’t reply to your smile” (l. 9), and follows this statement with “It’s a denial of identity” (l. 9). This could mean that Muslim women are unable to interact, and are denied an identity by covering up. It could also be interpreted to mean that *burqa*-clad women deny others access to their identity and the right to have their civility reciprocated.

Copé’s reference to “rights” (l. 8) indicates a rights discourse, where women have the right to be free from the supposed patriarchal oppression that the veil indicates, and French citizens have the right to be free from the cultural/extremist threat that the veil symbolises. According to Freedman (2007) this presents an antagonism between advocating universal rights for women on the one hand, and protecting minorities’ cultural rights on the other. This is because banning the headscarf/veil in the name of universal rights is arguably a Eurocentric conception of women’s rights, and ends up infringing on Muslim women’s right to observe their religion or culture (Freedman, 2007). And where the veil is associated with an extremist threat, shifts in national policy occur from an “assertion of the ‘right to difference’, and a defence of minority rights, to a more strongly assimilationist approach” (Freedman, 2007, p. 29). In this way, minorities are required to moderate or subdue their religious or cultural identity in order to be accepted. Furthermore, in the extract that follows, it is seen that far from protecting Muslim women, the ban places further limitations on their rights.

Extract 23

Under the law promoted by Nicolas Sarkozy, any Muslim woman wearing a face veil is now banned from all public places in France, including when walking down the street, taking a train, going to hospital or collecting her children from school. Women in niqabs will be effectively under house arrest, allowed only inside a place of worship or a private car, although they risk being stopped by traffic police if they drive. (The Guardian, April 11, 2011).

If Muslim women wear the veil, they will be “banned from all public places in France” (l. 2). This effectively prevents them from carrying out daily activities such as “walking down the

street, taking a train, going to hospital or collecting [their] children from school” (ll. 2-3). Essentially this places them “under house arrest” (l. 4). Banning them from public places will also result in their reduced visibility. The issue of Muslims’ visibility in France could be viewed as similar to Richardson’s (2004) assertion that the visibility of British Muslims disrupts the imagined privilege of white culture and ethnicity in a national space that is conceived of as its own. In extract 24 from the same article, however, it shows that many Muslim women in France who wear the veil are “French converts” (l. 5) meaning they are national citizens.

Extract 24

Women in face veils risk a €150 (£132) fine or citizenship lessons. Police cannot forcibly remove face coverings in the street but can order women to a police station to check their identity. The government estimates between 350 and 2,000 women cover their faces in France, out of a total Muslim population between four and six million.

Some niqab-wearers – many of them French converts – vowed to continue going out and to take their cases to the European court of human rights if stopped by police. Others have moved abroad, while just one woman told French papers she had permanently removed her face covering. (The Guardian, April 11, 2011).

Brubaker (1992, cited in Hussein & Bagguley, 2005) argues that citizenship involves inclusion and exclusion, and in most European states the status of citizens is recognised by their country of birth. In the extract above though, the measures taken against women who veil indicate that even though Muslim women might be native to France, their Muslim identity will prevent them from fitting in. This reflects the idea that citizenship and identity are often counter-posed to each other (Hussein & Bagguley, 2005). Citizenship is seen to encompass universal rights and duties, whereas identity implies particularism and group membership (Hussein & Bagguley, 2005). Subjecting women to citizenship lessons if they wear the veil reinforces the idea that symbols of Muslim-ness do not fit into French society. So even though they are French citizens, the women’s Muslim identity positions them as an out-group. Furthermore, a state ban on the veil could legitimise cultural racism and even make way for institutionalised racism through legislation. As the extract above indicates, under the ban the practice of veiling in public is illegal and Muslim women risk being fined, or ordered to police stations for identity checks. This not only stigmatises Muslim women, but contributes to a sense of criminalisation.

In extract 24 it is also estimated that out of a total Muslim population of 4-6 million, only 350 – 2000 women in France cover their faces. Banning the veil would therefore further marginalise a small minority of women, within an already marginalised population in France. That the practice of such a small number of women has caused so much debate, however, suggests that the *niqab* alone is not the problem, but is representative of a trend toward anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia. Extract 25 below supports the idea that the *niqab* alone is not the problem; instead the ban indicates a need to contain Muslim visibility in France.

Extract 25

Topics include the building of mosques – a few overcrowded, makeshift prayer-rooms spill on to the street – as well as Sarkozy's drive to ban halal food in secular school canteens and define how French imams should preach.

Sarkozy's former diversity adviser, sacked for denouncing the debate, called Copé an Islamophobe.

Copé dismisses this outright. He argues that fundamentalists are creating a "deformed caricature" of Islam and stoking tension in France.

"There are a certain number of extreme behaviours led by fundamentalists who are using their religion for political ends and use extremist techniques," he says, citing street prayers, the *niqab*, women refusing to be treated by male doctors and girls banned by their parents from mixed swimming sessions.

"None of these phenomena existed 10 years ago. They have developed today with fundamentalism. The Front National is seizing on them to caricature Muslims and exacerbate tensions.

"All this is happening with a backdrop in France of a social crisis, and an identity crisis for some recent immigrant families who haven't been able to integrate for various reasons: they were put in ghettos, they have education or professional problems, crime or they can't make ends meet."

The 1905 French law separating church and state predated the arrival of most Muslims, he argues, so now "Islam in France" must be defined. "We have to remind of the rules of secularism and come up with concrete measures." (The Guardian, March 24, 2011).

In the extract it appears that the *niqab* is taken as symbolic of Islam in general. Debates in France include topics related to other Islamic practices such prayer, *halal* (permissible) food, and the sermons delivered by *imams* (leaders). The extract provides a crude description of

mosques as “overcrowded”, and “makeshift” (l. 1) which indicates a basic and unsophisticated structure. The mosques “spill on to the streets” (l. 2), and this suggests an image of makeshift mosque structures spreading beyond a boundary or limit. This can be taken as expressive of the need to contain Islam. Later in the extract Copé speaks of how “‘Islam in France’ must be defined” (l. 20). The French need to define Islam reflects an Orientalist approach of defining and containing the ‘other’ on one’s own terms.

Another example of how Islam is defined by others is where Copé denies being an Islamophobe, and argues that fundamentalists are creating a “deformed caricature” (ll. 6-7) of Islam. Although this is a valid point, when Copé cites “street prayers, the niqab, women refusing to be treated by male doctors and girls banned by their parents from mixed swimming sessions” (ll. 10-11) as examples of extreme behaviour, he himself is presenting a distorted image of Islam. These Muslim actions can be taken as acts of religious consciousness. In the extract though, religious displays that are conspicuous are interpreted as proof of religious extremism. By implication then, any Muslim engaging in devout practice could be labelled a fundamentalist.

Although Copé draws on the discourse of Muslim fundamentalism, he mentions how this is happening with a backdrop of “a social crisis, and an identity crisis” (ll. 15-16). He explains that recent immigrant families have been unable to successfully integrate because they live in ghettos, have educational and employment problems, or experience crime and poverty. Immigration issues in France are thus generating a social crisis and it is possible that this social crisis is what creates a xenophobic attitude toward immigrants. Islamophobia in France could then possibly be explained by this immigrant crisis. Immigrants are often identified by their ethnicity, but their ethnic minority identity is conflated with religious identity. This is because religious identity is often embedded in ethnicity (Cesari, 2002). As a result, it is possible that the prejudice directed at ethnic minority groups will lead to prejudice against Muslims and Islam more generally.

The idea of Muslims posing a cultural threat in France is later affirmed by Copé’s argument that secularist law “predated the arrival of most Muslims” (ll. 19-20) in France. This

establishes Muslims' out-group status, and constructs them as a constitutive outside. Where Copé calls on the rules of secularism and advocates "concrete measures" (l. 21), Muslims are effectively denied the ability to practice their religion freely. For example, banning *halal* food in secular school canteens would marginalize Muslim students. Attempts to control how Islam is practiced are also evident in the need to "define how French imams preach" (l. 3). This interference in religious practice also goes against the secularist ideals that are promoted. While France uses the pretext of being a secular state, Sivanandan (2006) argues that secularist states have yet to distinguish between rites and rights. Religious symbols that people exhibit, such as the cross or hijab, are viewed as a rite, but from the view of the secular state, they are a right. This is because a secular state is defined by equality of individual liberty, where a person's freedom is limited only by another's (Sivanandan, 2006).

It could therefore be argued that debates around the veil are less because of secularism, and more about the veil being a symbolic element of the 'other'. The banning of it is possibly an attempt to reduce the visibility of Islam in France so that the culture of French society is preserved. This discourse that perceives Islam and the face veil as a threat to the culture of French society is consistent with the Orientalist way of constructing binaries: secularism versus Islam, 'us' versus 'them', and East versus West (Ardizzoni, 2004). Ardizzoni (2004) argues that such a narrow approach reflects a notion of identity as bounded and complete. Identities however, as discussed earlier, are contextual, relational, always in a process of formation and never to be taken as complete (Hall, 2000).

4.5 Extremes in variation in the construction of Muslims

In this section, I look at the extremes in variation when it comes to the construction of Muslims. On the one hand, Muslims are comprehensively racialised. This has the effect of identifying them as different. It also indicates how religion has come to stand in for race. And on the other end, Muslims are constructed using a rhetoric of inclusiveness where their values are seen as compatible with British/Western values.

4.5.1 The Racialisation of Muslims. When looking at how Muslims are identified, a process of racialization is apparent in the data. Dunn et al. (2007) explain that new racism

finds continuity in drawing on the physical features of targets be they observable bodily features, clothing, or place of residence. In the data analysed, Muslims were recognised as different based on features such as clothing and place of residence. In extract 26 Sarsour, a Palestinian Muslim, recalls a moment following the 9/11 terror attacks, when she realised her experience of being a Muslim in America was about to change. Sarsour's mother was rushing out to pick up her son from school, but without her *hijab* on. The extract shows how skin colour is not used as an indicator of difference, because her brother "looks like a white kid" (l. 3). Rather it is the *hijab* that her mother felt would have alerted people to the boy's Muslim identity.

Extract 26

"I bumped into her," Sarsour says. "I was: 'Mom! You forgot to wear your hijab.' And she said: 'We can't wear it.' She was going to pick up my brother from middle school. My brother looks like a white kid with dark hair and she didn't want to wear a hijab so that people would not know he was a Muslim. I was speechless." (The Guardian, September 5, 2011).

Extracts 27 and 28 indicate that on top of clothing, an identifying physical feature is the beard for men. Moreover, the beard is associated with extremism or fundamentalism. Extract 27 refers to the "beardies" (l. 2) which are militant extremists in Russia, whereas extract 28 mentions Gaddafi wearing a "beard" (l. 2) that is characteristic of "the fundamentalist salafists, or wahabi interpretation of Islam" (l. 3). He also reportedly carried "prayer beads" (l. 4). This portrayal of beards and prayer beads as representative of extremism or fundamentalism indicates an Islamophobic approach. It is irrational and essentialising to take these features as characteristic of extremism/fundamentalism because these items are often taken as symbolic of faith, thus it is unlikely that every person with a beard or prayer beads is an extremist.

Extract 27

Albert, a taxi driver who declined to give his surname, said: "Every other day someone is exterminated. The beardies [extremists] leave leaflets around town threatening, 'don't go to this doctor, don't get your hair cut by a woman.'" (The Guardian, February 20, 2011).

Extract 28

Gaddafi, who has only twice agreed to be interviewed since the rebel uprising in Libya in February, had transformed his appearance. He wore a beard which was characteristic of the fundamentalist salafist, or wahabi interpretation of Islam during the interview, and reportedly carried Islamic prayer beads. (The Guardian, August 4, 2011).

This generalisation or reductive use of physical features to signpost Muslims is again evident in the extract below. Here, the extract uses metonyms, which is when a concept or word is substituted with another closely associated word (Richardson, 2007). By referring to Muslims as “beards and hijabs” (l. 2), the extract shows how intimately linked these physical features are with Muslim people. The use of metonyms like “beard”/“*hijabs*” is reductive though, as it reduces Muslim men and women to simplistic observable features. It also disregards the fact that not all Muslim men have beards, and neither do all Muslim women wear the *hijab*.

Extract 29

But from my own vantage point on the platform at Hyde Park that afternoon, I was disappointed to see few beards or hijabs among the sea of faces in the crowd – despite the fact that deprived Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities will be hit hardest by the coalition's cuts to public services. (The Guardian, April 2, 2011).

Another way in which Muslims are racialised is by identifying Muslim spaces or places of residence. The occupation of an urban space by an ethnic minority community often leads to the racialisation of that space, and that neighbourhood can become stigmatised or discriminated against (Andersson, 1998). In the extract 30 below, Rochdale is referred to as a Muslim “ghetto” (l. 1). The word “ghetto” has connotations of a poor, crime ridden neighbourhood. This is evident in extract 31. As a result of being placed in ghettos Muslim

immigrant families in France are unable to integrate, and an association with educational problems, unemployment and crime is made.

Extract 30

"I grew up in what people would call a Muslim ghetto, in Rochdale," says Haras Rafiq, director of the moderate Muslim think-tank Centri. (The Daily Telegraph, April 16, 2011).

Extract 31

"All this is happening with a backdrop in France of a social crisis, and an identity crisis for some recent immigrant families who haven't been able to integrate for various reasons: they were put in ghettos, they have education or professional problems, crime or they can't make ends meet." (The Guardian, March 24, 2011).

On a larger scale, the data revealed that countries too were identified as Muslim spaces. Rather than focusing on nationality, these countries were identified as "Islamic", and the citizens were also spoken of in relation to their religious identity: "Muslims" and "Christians". The result of this is a conflation of political practices with Islamic principles. This was clear in extract 8 discussed earlier where young Muslims in Indonesia are urged to abandon the "dead-end choice of dictatorship and extremism" (l. 2) suggesting that these are characteristic of Muslim countries. When discussing countries that have a predominantly Muslim population, the articles appear to conflate political ideologies with a religion. While it is plausible that these countries use religion in an instrumental way, it is too simplistic to say that their political systems and activities are a reflection of the values inherent to Islam.

4.5.2 Compatibility between Islamic and British/Western values. The racialisation of Muslims indicates a constructed difference between 'them' and 'us'. A consequence of this is that the self's political or cultural systems are seen as superior to that of the 'other'. Allen (2010) suggests that this is because there is such a strong attachment to 'our' way of life that it inevitably leads to a negative interpretation of other cultures. Although the data largely appeared to support this, there were some articles which suggested

that Islamic/Muslim values were compatible with British/Western values. These articles introduced variation not only in the way Muslims were constructed, but also in terms of subject matter. While the preceding discussions indicated a narrow focus on particular topics such as extremism, *sharia* law and the headscarf/veil, the extract that follows is from an article about a famous Muslim musician.

Extract 32

In 2007, the Lebanese-born Swedish musician Maher Zain was in the US, preparing for the next stage of his career. He was working with chart-topping artists and recording with the Grammy-winning music producer RedOne, himself a Swede of Moroccan heritage. Success was almost within his grasp. Even so, he could feel something was wrong.

"I felt that the music business was very empty," Zain says from a hotel room in Cairo, over Skype. "In the west, all the songs are about love and getting hurt, but there's more to life than that." After making some new Muslim friends in Sweden and finding solace in going to the mosque, he began to practise Islam seriously. But music was something he had loved from a young age and he didn't want to abandon it. Instead, he made a transition: he swapped secular music for something more religious.

In the process, he ended up finding celebrity status anyway. His debut album, *Thank You Allah*, released in late 2009, became a worldwide sensation: the record took top position on Amazon.com's world music chart, and was the best-selling album of the decade in Malaysia. In Indonesia, it even knocked Justin Bieber off the leading spot.

Zain has been criticised by some Muslims for using musical instruments – a contentious issue in Islamic jurisprudence, with many scholars insisting the voice should take minimal accompaniment. However, Zain's use of music represents the nuances of his faith, and there are other scholars who argue that activities should be considered permissible unless explicitly forbidden in the Qur'an, which music is not.

"I grew up with music and thus using musical instruments was just natural," Zain says. "I did fear a reaction [to using music]. I spoke to some people and they clarified that it's just a matter of difference of opinion amongst Muslim scholars and that as long as the content is positive and clean, then it will be fine. My music is a message of Islam. But I want people to understand what Islam is about. It's a message of peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love."

The fusion of east and west permeates Zain's music. In his videos, including *Insha'Allah* and *The Chosen One* – which have almost 25m YouTube views between them – we see him wearing western attire but reflecting on Islamic topics. The supposed contrast between the two ways of life is challenged in the videos. "I've learned that Islam doesn't contradict with anyone or anytime. It's for everywhere and all times," he says.

His rise to prominence is emblematic of the Arab revolutions, in which young Muslims who don't want to choose between Islam and modernity have played a leading role. Zain's latest single, Freedom, was inspired by the uprisings: "Freedom comes from what happened in Tunis and then in Egypt. We hope it carries on in a peaceful way for freedom to prevail." He is now working on his second album. With Islamophobia such a problem in America and Europe, could Zain's music make an impact in changing people's perceptions of Islam? "I've seen that people want to hear good music but with a positive message. I think it can reach out to new people, given the topics and the quality we are hoping to produce." (The Guardian, December 15, 2011).

The extract above is from an article looking at Muslim musician, Maher Zain. The article is interesting because it draws on an Orientalist discourse where 'East' and 'West' are differentiated. What's different though is that Zain, as a Muslim, is positioned positively within this discourse, and Eastern and Western cultures are seen as reconcilable. For one, being a "Lebanese-born Swedish" (l. 1), Zain's hybrid identity is a combination of Eastern and Western cultures. A similar identity combination is found with his producer RedOne who is a "Swede of Moroccan heritage" (ll. 3-4). Zain's career is also seen to have successfully spanned both Western and Eastern contexts. In the extract, Zain is first discussed within a Western context. In 2007 he was in the US "preparing for the next stage of his career" (ll. 1-2). His career is depicted as on the rise, with success "almost within his grasp" (l. 4). Despite this setting of potential career success, Zain could feel "something was wrong" (l. 5). The article then shifts to an Eastern context, where Zain is now in Cairo. He explains that he felt the "music business was very empty" (l. 6) in the West and this accounts for his transition.

In accounting for this transition a comparison is made between the East and West, but it is the West that is negatively differentiated from the East. Western music culture is perceived as shallow or "empty", where all the songs are about "love" and "getting hurt" (l. 7). Zain says that there is "more to life than that" (l. 8). What is particularly notable here is that Zain's transition follows a similar path to the home-grown terrorist described in extract 1. Zain felt something was "wrong" in his career, he became acquainted with some Muslims, started going to the mosque and began to practice Islam more seriously. The language used though, constructs this as a positive experience. The Muslims he began to spend time with were "some new Muslim friends in Sweden" (l. 8). As "friends" they can be perceived as non-

threatening, and they are not associated with any foreign ideology, but are inclusively positioned “in Sweden”. His attendance at the mosque is also constructed as a positive experience as he found “solace” (l. 9) in going there. In this way, his transition and swapping of “secular music” for “religious music” (l. 11) is seen as better for him. And the article says “he ended up finding celebrity status anyway” (l. 12), suggesting his Muslim identity is not problematic. His fame does appear to be more prominent in Eastern, or populated Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, but he topped Amazon.com’s world music chart showing he is likely known worldwide. Additionally, the fact the he is being interviewed by a British newspaper suggests a fan base in Britain who would be interested in his story.

Another way in which parallels can be drawn between Zain and the construction of terrorists is that Zain’s efforts have also been inspired by current global events in the Muslim world. In his case though, it is again a positive reaction. His “rise to prominence” (l. 33) is taken as symbolic of the current Arab revolutions, where young Muslims who “don’t want to choose between Islam and modernity have played a leading role” (ll. 34-35). His latest album, he says, is inspired by the uprisings in Tunis and Egypt. Unlike the terrorist, violent reactions to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Zain hopes for the uprisings to carry on in a “peaceful way” (l. 37), and hopes his music can have some impact on Islamophobia and changing negative perceptions about Islam.

The article goes on to mention how Zain has received criticism from some Muslims because music is a “contentious issue in Islamic jurisprudence” (l. 17). It also mentions how he did “fear a reaction” (l. 22) to using music. The article does not construct the Islamic censoring of music as backward, irrational or problematic though. Rather, it provides insight into how there are “nuances” (l. 19) within the faith, and differences of opinion. This could serve as an example of how Islamic law works and how it broadly encompasses all aspects of a Muslim’s life. Zain himself does not explicitly state whether he thinks music is permitted or not. For him, he “grew up” with music and so the use of instruments is “natural” (l. 21).

Finally, the article's positive positioning of Zain within an Orientalist discourse is particularly evident where it says "The fusion of east and west permeates Zain's music" (l. 27). In his videos he is wearing "western attire but reflecting on Islamic topics" (l. 29). According to the article this "fusion" of cultures challenges the notion that there is a contrast between Islam and the West. The Islamic values that Zain says his music aims to share, are universal values of "peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love" (ll. 25-26), prompting him to add that Islam is "for everywhere and all times" (ll. 31-32).

In the extracts that follow, there is again variation in the way that Muslims are constructed. The three extracts (33, 34 and 35) are from the same article which is about an exhibition at the British Museum looking at the Muslim pilgrimage or *hajj*. The article seeks to dispel prejudices against Islam, and although long, it is very detailed and provides an in-depth historical background to the pilgrimage. In this way, an understanding of Muslims and their practices is augmented.

Extract 33

Ever since the Crusades, when Christians from western Europe were fighting holy wars against Muslims in the near east, western people have often perceived Islam as a violent and intolerant faith – even though when this prejudice took root Islam had a better record of tolerance than Christianity. Recent terrorist atrocities have seemed to confirm this received idea. But if we want a peaceful world, we urgently need a more balanced view. We cannot hope to win the "battle for hearts and minds" unless we know what is actually in them. Nor can we expect Muslims to be impressed by our liberal values if they see us succumbing unquestioningly to a medieval prejudice born in a time of extreme Christian belligerence.

Like Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Sikhs and secularists, some Muslims have undoubtedly been violent and intolerant, but the new exhibition at the British Museum – *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* – is a timely reminder that this is not the whole story. The hajj is one of the five essential practices of Islam; when they make the pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims ritually act out the central principles of their faith. Equating religion with "belief" is a modern western aberration. Like swimming or driving, religious knowledge is practically acquired. You learn only by doing. The ancient rituals of the hajj, which Arabs performed for centuries before Islam, have helped pilgrims to form habits of heart and mind that – *pace* the western stereotype – are non-violent and inclusive. (The Guardian, January 22, 2012).

The article begins with a reference to the Crusades, which involved holy wars between Christians from Western Europe and Muslims from the near East. The article explains that at that time Islam was perceived as a “violent and intolerant faith” (l. 3). And today, the recent terror attacks appear to “confirm this received idea” (l. 5) of Islam as violent and intolerant. That this idea is “received” suggests that the prejudice against Islam today has historical continuity and is not a recent construction. It is therefore suggested that at present, “we” are “succumbing unquestioningly” (l. 8) to a prejudice that was historically constructed. The article therefore calls for a “more balanced view” (ll. 5-6), and refers to anti-Islam prejudice as a “medieval prejudice born in a time of extreme Christian belligerence” (ll. 8-9). In this way, the idea that Muslims pose a threat to Christians is inverted with suggestions that Crusader Christians were more violent and intolerant. Although the article seeks to construct Muslims more positively, by using the pronoun “we” and speaking about “our” liberal values, they are still positioned as an out-group. Here, however, as an out-group there is no suggestion that they need to assimilate, rather the onus appears to be on the British to impress with their liberal values.

In its attempt to provide a more balanced view, the article then goes on to impartially explain how within all religious and non-religious groups there are undoubtedly some “violent and intolerant” (l. 11) members but it is important to remember that these members do not represent the “whole story” (ll. 12-13). The main purpose of the article is to promote/create awareness about a new exhibition at the British Museum titled “Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam” (ll. 12). It is suggested that knowledge about other aspects of Islam will create a better understanding and help to deconstruct stereotypes. Following this logic, the article itself attempts to provide detailed information about the history of the *hajj*. The *hajj* is one of the five foundational principles of Islam. It is the pilgrimage made to Mecca, during which Muslims “ritually act out the central principles of their faith” (l. 14). The article explains that religious knowledge is practically acquired and learnt through “doing” (l. 16). Islam can therefore be understood as a religion that encompasses both belief and practice. The article constructs this belief-practice link as normal through inversion by saying that equating religion with belief alone is a “modern western aberration” (l. 15). Modern western religious observance could therefore be taken as unusual.

The article continues to try and provide a more balanced view of Islam by confronting the stereotype that Islamic practices encourage violence. It explains that the rituals of *hajj* were performed by Arabs for centuries before Islam, and the idea is that these rituals help pilgrims develop “habits of heart and mind” (l. 18) which are non-violent and inclusive. In extract 34, it is explained how violence of any kind is forbidden during the pilgrimage. This includes carrying weapons, killing insects, or even speaking in anger, and the discipline that this restraint requires, introduces a “new way of living” (l. 3). The article also includes a detailed account of how the Prophet Muhammad drew on this tradition and carried out an “audacious non-violent initiative” (l. 8) that helped to ease hostilities between the Muslims and the Meccans at that time.

Extract 34

In the holy city of Mecca, violence of any kind was forbidden. From the moment they left home, pilgrims were not permitted to carry weapons, to swat an insect or speak an angry word, a discipline that introduced them to a new way of living. At a climactic moment of his prophetic career, Muhammad drew on this tradition. Fleeing persecution in Mecca in 622, he and the Muslim community (the umma) had migrated to Medina, 250 miles to the north. Mecca was determined to destroy the umma and a bitter conflict ensued. But eventually Muhammad broke the deadly cycle of warfare with an audacious non-violent initiative. (The Guardian, January 22, 2012).

In addition to dispelling misconceptions about Islam and violence, the article also seeks to counter the idea that there are no commonalities between Islam and other religions. In extract 35 it is explained that the *hajj* is based on the experiences of the prophet Abraham and his family.

Extract 35

Like Abraham, who had not belonged to a closed-off cult, they would take no pride in an established institution and, as Abraham had done, focus on the worship of God alone. Hence the Muslim *hajj* is all about the Abrahamic family – not Muhammad himself. Pilgrims re-enact the story of Hagar and Ishmael, symbolically returning to the era that preceded religious chauvinism.

Alas, all traditions lose their primal purity and we all fail our founders. But the British Museum's beautiful presentation of the hajj can help us understand how the vast majority of the world's Muslims understand their faith. Socrates, founder of the western rational tradition, insisted that the exercise of reason required us constantly and stringently to question received ideas and entrenched certainties. The new exhibition can indeed become a journey to the heart of Islam and also, perhaps, to a more authentic and respectful western rational identity. (The Guardian, January 22, 2012).

The extract explains that Muslims follow the same monotheistic practice of Abraham of worshipping God alone. The rituals of the *hajj* are a re-enactment of the story of Hagar and Ishmael, the family of Abraham, and according to the article, this symbolises a return to an era preceding religious chauvinism. The inclusion of these historic details is important when considering how Islam is often taken as a foreign or alien religion. Like Christianity and Judaism, Islam is also rooted in the Abrahamic tradition. Muslims believe that all three faiths are descendant from the patri-lineage of Abraham, where Jews and Christians can trace themselves back to Abraham and his wife Sarah, and Muslims to Abraham and the servant-girl Hagar (Esposito, 2002).

It is also Abraham who built the 'Ka'bah' – the sacred structure around which the pilgrims circumambulate. It is considered the first house of worship of the one God and it is also toward the Ka'bah that Muslims face while praying daily to demonstrate unity (Esposito, 2002). Muslims also recognise and respect many of the biblical prophets, and believe that God sent his revelation first to the Jews through the prophet Moses, and then to the Christians through the prophet Jesus, and the final revelation to the prophet Muhammad (Esposito, 2002). All three faiths stress “moral responsibility and accountability, Judgment Day, and eternal reward and punishment” (Esposito, 2002, p. 73).

Understanding similarities in religious faith and values could help to reduce misunderstandings about Islam. Islam today, however, is not often compared to other religions, but is instead differentiated from culture/ethnicity. As Saleh (2009) noted, this polarisation is odd and makes it difficult to identify what is being compared. Additionally, constructions of Islam are seen to rely on available stereotypes or clichés, which are often constructed in response to events affecting the in-group, or based on the actions of a few

Muslims. In this way, the history of Islam and the way in which Muslim themselves understand their faith is overlooked. The article suggests a differentiation between the “primal purity” (l. 6) of religious traditions and the failings of its followers. This indicates that Islam itself should not be taken as inherently violent if Muslims behave in ways that are violent. The article suggests that doing so is an irrational response and opposes the idea of a “western rational identity” (l. 12).

The reference to “western rational tradition” (l. 9) is interesting because it introduces the idea of a Western identity, and unlike in most of the other articles, opens it up to criticism. Here, this Western identity is equated with rationality. To unquestioningly accept “received ideas and entrenched certainties” (l. 10) would therefore go against this ideal of rationality. This is because rationality, or the exercise of reason, requires a constant deconstruction of prevailing views and structures. The article suggests that when this is realised, a more “authentic and respectful western rational identity” (l. 12) will be achieved.

4.6 Implications of variation

The above examples of articles that introduced variation are important because they appear to disrupt “received ideas” about Islam and Muslims. These instances of variation can be criticised though because, as the extracts above show, they were very specific. Extract 32, for example, is about an individual Muslim who has successfully managed to reconcile both his Muslim and European identities. As a celebrity he could possibly be perceived as an exception to the norm. Another limitation is that both examples appear in the Culture section of *The Guardian*. Although I did not differentiate between genres of articles, it seems worth pointing out that the articles that contained the most detailed and balanced perspective on Muslims/Islam were found in the Culture section. This would mean that these articles are read by a much smaller audience, as opposed to articles found in the News sections.

Despite this marginalisation, it is important to look at variation because it reveals how identity is discursively constructed. As mentioned, the point of discourse analysis is to examine the legitimacy of discourses by revealing and deconstructing what is taken for

granted (Graham, 2005). If across the data, there was a single dominant discourse that constructed Muslims in one particular way, this would be difficult to deconstruct. For example, if Muslims were only constructed as terrorists, it could become difficult to conceive of them in any other way. Although dominant discourses appear to work in this way, as evidenced by how Orientalist stereotypes have become well established, it is important to remember that discourses are socially constructed and therefore not fully sutured (De Vos, 2003). Thus identities constructed through discourses are also socially constructed and never taken as complete. Accordingly, actively seeking out the different ways in which Muslims are constructed, even if these variations are negative/marginalised, will indicate the possibility of Muslims being constructed or represented in multiple, more facilitative ways. An awareness of variation therefore enables a disruption of dominant discourses, and in the context of this study, allows for the legitimacy of Orientalist and/or Islamophobic constructions to be challenged.

5. Further Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Concluding overview and discussion of the research study

This research study was premised on the idea that knowledge and social reality are knowable through language. The importance of language as constitutive of reality relates to the area of discourse, wherein discourses are understood to influence how people speak and act, to legitimise forms of knowledge and political practices, and to determine which modes of representation are favoured over others (Jackson, 2007). With this understanding of the relation between language, representation and power, the research sought to examine how language is used to construct the identity of Muslims in British newspapers, with thought given to how this might contribute to stereotyping and prejudice. Overall, the analysis showed that the articles were primarily focused on topics such as Islamist extremism, *sharia* law, discrimination towards Christians, the veil or *hijab*, and the political situations in countries like Nigeria and Egypt. This framing (Downing & Husband, 2005), or narrow focus on particular traits or topics was generally found to be negative in that Muslims/Islam were depicted through an Orientalist lens or an Islamophobic discourse.

The largely negative tone of the newspapers' coverage follows van Dijk's (1996) argument that stories about minorities are often stereotypical and related to social problems. The analysis of the data showed a reliance on discourses that portrayed Muslims and Islamic practices/concepts as foreign, oppressive, and incompatible with Western democratic ideals. In relation to the first aim of the study, i.e., identifying how language is used to construct Muslims, a prevalence of core labels, terms and discursive formations used in reference to Muslims was evident within the articles. These labels, terms and discursive formations were often used to construct Muslims as a problematic 'other'. This was apparent in the way Muslims were identified as a social grouping based on their faith and religious practices. Although there was acknowledgment and reference to nationality, race and ethnicity, emphasis was usually placed on their 'Muslim' identity. This was done through processes of racialization where Muslims were primarily identified by their Muslim-ness, i.e. using physical features such the *hijab* or beard, or referring to spaces such as neighbourhoods or countries which are primarily occupied by Muslims.

The reasoning behind or purpose of constructing Muslims as 'other' was the concern of the second research aim which looked at the rhetorical function of discursive constructions. The construction of Muslims as 'other' can be taken as indicative of how identity construction is relational with the demarcation of an 'other' being necessary. Furthermore, the negative differentiation of Muslims indicates how processes of identity construction are inherently strategic and linked to acts of power. This was particularly evident in the way Muslims were constructed and positioned within a discourse of threat/terror.

By using terms and phrases associated with violence and extremism, a discourse of terror and threat was often pronounced within the articles in response to extremist attacks by individuals in Britain, the activities of Islamists in Muslim-majority countries, and attacks on minority Christian groups. This discourse of terror functioned to associate terrorism and violence with Islam and portrays Muslims as an external threat to physical/national security. This had the effect of essentialising Muslims as inherently violent. It also placed responsibility and blame on Muslims as a whole for the actions of a few, discounting other structural or political factors that could be in play. In addition to being constructed as an external threat, Muslims were also constructed as posing an internal, cultural threat to British/Western identity with concerns around issues of values, identity, visibility and integration. This was done through drawing on discourses of isolation and integration. Depicted as self-isolating and reluctant to integrate, Muslims were portrayed as a threat to societal cohesion and the idea of a unified national/cultural identity.

Depicting Muslims as a threat to national security and identity was seen to justify certain practices and this links to the third aim of the study which was to consider the relationship between existing discourses and social practices. Taking Hansen's (2006) discussion of the serviceable other, the Derridean notion of the 'constitutive outside' (De Vos, 2003), and Lentin's (2003) discussion of the racist state into account, constructing Muslims as a negative 'other' arguably justifies their marginalisation and scapegoating, and also justifies particular foreign and domestic policies such as military action, immigration laws, multiculturalism and assimilation. This was apparent within the articles where the construction of Muslims as 'other' was linked closely to discussions around combatting extremism, and debates over citizenship, loyalty and rights.

When looking at the third aim of the study and how existing discourses influence social practices, it is admittedly difficult to base this off an analysis of newspaper texts alone. Although the centrality of media influence is indisputable, it is too simplistic to assume that people interpret media texts in a passive or uniform manner (Ben Moussa, 2004). Instead, media interaction ought to be understood as dynamic with individuals bringing to bear their shared and personal experiences, as well as their particular individual traits, when producing meaning from media texts (Ben Moussa, 2004). Furthermore, it is important to highlight the fact that media as an institution does not monopolise all the channels and spaces through which identity is constructed and through which people make sense of the world (Ben Moussa, 2004). It therefore becomes necessary to consider other societal institutions, structures and means through which people interpret identity and/or social reality. This point of discussion reveals a limitation of the study, and this is expanded on in the next chapter.

Before looking at the limitations of the study, it necessary to point out that although Muslims are often constructed as a racialised ‘other’, the analysis showed that at times they can also be constructed using inclusive terminology where their construction does not include terms of difference but rather those of compatibility and similarity. Therefore, while the above discussion reveals how a number of dominant discourses were favoured, there were instances of variation which disrupted the generally negative narrative. Although marginalised, variation in the data showed that Muslims are not all Islamists, nor are all Islamists necessarily violent and opposed to ideals of democracy. Another alternative construction was that Muslim women do not experience Islam as oppressive, but rather where there is oppression, it is rooted in culture. The idea of Muslims’ reluctance to integrate was also challenged with suggestions that their participation is either impeded by structures of inequality, or they do in fact participate and contribute without issue.

5.2 Coherence, new problems and fruitfulness

Variation is also important in terms of coherence. Using Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) advice on validity, I have tried in my analysis and discussion to provide a coherent account by looking at meaning across texts, but also by including a micro-analysis of the linguistic structures used. Coherence, they advise, is also increased by looking at variation, which I

have again tried to be attentive to throughout the analysis. Where constructions of Muslims deviated from dominant patterns, this revealed how there is a privileging of particular representations. As such, instances of variation opened up new problems (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) around how Muslims can be constructed. Variation in the analysis indicated that Muslims can be constructed in positive, non-threatening ways. It also indicated that to portray Muslims, especially women, as without agency is itself oppressive. Consequently, an interesting avenue of research would be to consider how we can harness positive constructions of Muslim identities, and mobilise their agency to offer opportunities for more equitable representation in the media. One possible solution that appeared in the data is the inclusion of minority voices. Van Dijk (1996) has argued that where minority groups are negatively represented, it is difficult for them to contest this because they have unequal access to the media. In the data, there were a number of articles written by minority journalists, with some of them identifiable as Muslims. These articles seemed to provide a more balanced view. Additionally, in many of the articles Muslim minorities were interviewed and given a voice, and these instances too provided balancing information. Where Muslims were able to comment on issues, this indicated a difference in interpretation between internal and external definitions. An example is the practice of *hijab*. In terms of fruitfulness (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), by looking at internal definitions and how Muslims themselves experience their identities, this allows for novel explanations. Within my discussion I have also attempted a novel analysis by discussing and explaining relevant concepts and issues from within an Islamic/Muslim perspective, while remaining within a social constructionist framework.

6. Limitations, Implications for Future Research, and Reflexivity

In this section, through a process of reflexivity, I consider the methodological and theoretical limitations to this study. Below, I first consider the shortcomings in my methods of data collection and analysis, and how addressing these weaknesses could have implications for future research. I then look at the importance of reflexivity when doing social constructionist research. This is followed by a critical reflection on my theoretical position, and how this influenced my analysis. I then consider my personal biases and how my social location possibly influenced my reading of the texts.

6.1 Limitations of the research study

When looking at the method used to collect data, a limitation is evident in terms of how the newspaper articles were sourced, the number of articles collected, and the time span imposed on the articles. Data was collected using the search functions on *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* websites. The search functions differed between the two, with *The Guardian*'s being easier to use. This meant that more articles were found from *The Guardian*. The data collection method used also yielded 65 articles which could be considered too few. To address these limitations the study could be improved by including more newspaper publications as this would possibly reduce the reliance on one newspaper and increase the number of articles available. The number of articles was also limited by the time frame which, if increased to more than one and a half years, would also have resulted in more articles. Increasing the time span could also have allowed for a more thorough application of Foucault's concepts of archaeology and genealogy (Kendall & Wickham, 1999) which would allow for the historicity and processual nature of discourses surrounding Muslims to be examined. Increasing the number of newspapers, articles and time span however, presents a tension of depth versus breadth in the analysis. For a Master's thesis, the time and space afforded to research can be seen as a limitation, and as such focusing on fewer newspapers and articles was considered more suitable and facilitative for an in-depth analysis and discussion.

Time and space limitations also meant that media research with journalists was beyond the scope of this project. I feel my research findings would be improved by looking more closely

at the news-making process, and the audience of the broadsheet newspapers used here. Hanyes, Devereux & Breen, (2004) suggest that Thompson's tripartite model (1990) be used when analysing newspaper discourse. The model considers the production context of media texts, with a focus on media organisation and media professionals (Hanyes et al., 2004). Secondly, it looks at the discursive content and construction of media texts (Hanyes et al., 2004). And thirdly, the model investigates the hermeneutic dimension of texts, which is how audiences receive and interpret messages from the media (Hanyes et al., 2004). This study included the second element, which was to look at the discursive nature of newspaper texts. To improve on this research study the elements of production and reception could be incorporated by including interviews with media professionals and readers of *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Interviewing media professionals would allow for first-hand commentary on the news-making practices outlined earlier (e.g. Pietikäinen, 2003; van Dijk, 1987; and Abbas, 2001) and would perhaps give some insight into how/why existing discourses on Muslims and Islam are selectively drawn on. Interviewing readers could help to identify the extent to which people's perceptions of Muslims are influenced by these newspaper discourses. Hargrave and Livingstone (2006) also suggest that with media research, it would be useful to speak to audience groups to assess their reaction to the content they have viewed.

6.2 Discourse analysis and subjectivity, material reality and cognitive processes

Interviewing audience groups about their experiences with media texts would be a complementary approach because it is argued that discourse alone is not enough to fully capture an individual's subjectivity (Willig, 2008). Although Foucauldian discourse analysts suggest that it is possible to discern issues of subjectivity, ideology and power through an analysis of texts, addressing these issues brings up theoretical questions "about the extent to which we can theorize subjectivity on the basis of discourse alone" (Willig, 2008, p. 123). In this study I focused on newspaper texts alone and did not have any human participants. As such, accessing a detailed account of individualised experiences was not required. I did however, offer tentative suggestions as to what Muslims could experience from being constructed or positioned in a particular way. To do this I drew on van Langenhove and Harré's (1999) positioning theory. With positioning theory it is believed that subjectivity

originates from discourses, meaning that subject positions taken up in discourses can become internalised leading to emotional/subjective experiences (Willig, 2000).

In addition to subjectivity, another critique of discourse analysis is that it neglects material reality. Since reality is seen as mediated through language, the question is whether reality can exist outside of discourse, and if discourses be constrained by social and material structures (Willig, 2008). For relativists, reality cannot exist outside of discourse, it is only through language that we are able to construct and access even the material world (Willig, 2008). For critical realists like Parker though, while our knowledge is mediated through language, there are “underlying structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena” (Willig, 2008, p. 130). Discursive constructions are therefore “grounded in social and material structures” (Willig, 2008, p. 130).

The influence of social and material structures appears to be particularly important when considering the ‘isolationist’ and ‘self-segregating’ discourses surrounding British Muslims. Phillips (2006), in her study on discourses that accuse British Muslims of isolationism and self-segregation, found that these discourses underplayed the “power of structural constraints (economic and institutional racism) and popular racism to shape minority ethnic housing and neighbourhood choices” (p. 29). Phillips (2006) suggests that these discourses favour “discussions about ethnicity and cultural difference at the expense of racialised inequalities in power and status” (p. 38). This means that the material effects of social structures such as economic systems and/or institutionalised racism are overlooked. While it was again beyond the scope of this study, it would be useful to look more closely at the structural nature of politics, race and institutional discrimination within Britain, and how these might influence media discourses on Muslims.

Discourse analysis also represents a “radically non-cognitive form of social psychology” where mental states and cognitive processes are a “nonissue” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 178-180). It is not suggested by Potter and Wetherell (1987) however, that “‘mental states’ or ‘cognitive processes’ are *necessarily* redundant concepts” (Willig, 2008, p. 106). As such, while this study favoured a rhetorical approach (Billig, 1985), and focused on the discursive nature of identity and prejudice, cognitive processes are not entirely dismissed. To do so

would result in a “kind of linguistic imperialism which denies significance to cognitive processes” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 180). This would also go against the postmodern assumption of multiplicities of truths (Sardar, 1998).

6.3 Importance of reflexivity

Before looking more closely at my postmodern position, I briefly discuss the importance of reflexivity here. In postmodern, social constructionist work, “the partial, provisional and perspectival nature of knowledge claims is recognised” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 416). This means that attention is paid to how knowledge is always linguistically, contextually and historically situated, with a definitive understanding that the researcher’s situated and subjective presence is always embedded within the text (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Accordingly, reports produced by a researcher are taken as discursive constructions and should not be considered outside of a discursive framework because the researcher “authors, rather than discovers, knowledge” (Willig, 2008, p. 126). This necessitated a reflexive awareness on my part, throughout the research process, of the problematic status of my own knowledge claims (Willig, 2008). Reflexivity is thus an exercise undertaken by researchers in which they acknowledge, reflect on, and account for their commitment to particular readings, analyses and interpretations (Gill, 1995, cited in Harper, 1999).

6.4 Reflecting on postmodernism and social constructionism

Postmodernism theory was deemed suitable because its concern with variety and multiplicity supports the argument for more equal representation and enables a critique against the positing of Western culture as superior (Sardar, 1998). Similarly, social constructionism was favoured because it puts forward the idea that reality can be constructed through language in different ways, and that dominant discourses can be deconstructed (Burr, 1998). The application of postmodernism and social constructionism presented some problems though. For instance, the concept of relativism which underlies both theories suggests that there is no ultimate reality behind things and that what we perceive to be real is culturally and historically located (Sardar, 1998). While this research study uses a social constructionist paradigm, rooted in postmodernism, I argue that it is not “inherently and exclusively relativist” (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 7). This is because a purely relativist approach

would treat all views as equally valid, with “no grounds for caring one way or another, on anything moral, political or factual” (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995, p. 39). To argue for something would therefore present a dilemma because it means caring, and being positioned, which are non-relativist (Edwards et al., 1999). In arguing against xeno-racist constructions of Muslims, I have accordingly taken a non-relativist position. In addition, because scholarly discourse is itself recognised as a social construction, Richardson (2007) argues that research is socio-politically situated whether we like it or not. In this case, “academic neutrality” (Richardson, 2007, p. 2) when it comes to racial/ethnic/religious prejudice could be seen as contributing to the perpetuation of social injustices. Therefore, while I use postmodern theory I do not take a purely relativist stance, but instead understand relativism here as a “quintessentially academic position” that enables critique, scepticism, resistance and the denial of taken for granted truths (Edwards et al., 1999, p. 37).

6.4.1 Practical concerns with applying theory. Other problems I encountered were the practical application of postmodern and social constructionist concepts into my analysis and discussion. Applying the postmodern concept of doubt (Sardar, 1998) into my discussion proved difficult, but during the analysis stage the principle was apparent in the difficulty that I experienced when trying to justify a particular reading of the text because multiple readings seemed possible. This is why at times I offered alternative or tentative explanations/interpretations for particular extracts. I also encountered doubt when doing the analysis because the subjective nature of discourse analysis means that guidelines “necessarily fall short of concrete ‘how-you-do-it’ instructions” (Burr, 1995, p. 163). As such, I was at times unsure how to go about the analysis, and Harper (1999) sums the experience up as “a continual movement between feeling I had nothing to say or feeling there was too much and that I would not be able to structure a coherent and linear argument” (p. 290). This process made clear that discourse analysis work is itself a construction (Burr, 1995).

Accordingly, a common critique of discourse analysis is that discourses do not emerge from the data, but are instead constructed by the analyst (Harper, 1999). While my reading of the articles was guided by existing literature and theory, and I tried to pick discourses that were common throughout the articles, this did not detract from my need as analyst to select which

issues and discourses to focus on. It is possible that this selection, and my subsequent analyses and interpretations, were influenced by my own biases. Therefore identifying personal biases is important because it enables the reader to judge for him-/herself the extent of the researcher's bias.

6.5 Personal biases.

To begin with, I am a practising female Muslim and consider my religious identity to be particularly salient. More specifically, I am a *Sunni* Muslim, and in practice I follow the *Hanafi* School of thought. Within the *Sunni* denomination of Islam there are four main juristic schools and although these four classical schools differ in their interpretation of Islamic law, they are all accepted as justifiable and well-founded. This respect for difference in opinion within Islam means that I can appreciate the tolerance of multiple truths and the critical thinking that postmodernism advocates. At the same time though, in agreement with Ahmed (1992) and Sardar (1998) I feel that postmodernism's cynicism and irony pose a threat to Islam, and/or other truths. The threat is that Islam will be knowable only through a postmodern lens and not be allowed an authentic voice. I therefore experienced some difficulty reconciling my position as researcher, with my Muslim status initially. This is because as a Muslim, I believe in God, and Islam, as absolute truths and I am not comfortable with their deconstruction. This could account for why I was comfortable working within a postmodern, social constructionist paradigm but without taking a thoroughly relativist approach.

The above nuances in my belief and practice have possibly led to bias in my work. For instance, where I account for Muslim practices, these are offered from within my context of understanding, and this could mean that interpretations/analyses would differ for other researchers. Although I used academic references, by both Muslim and non-Muslim writers, it is also possible that I chose readings which matched or affirmed the knowledge/understanding of Islam that I already held. That said however, I feel my position as a Muslim was useful at times because I already had some insight into, and understanding of, Islam/Muslims. I was therefore able to focus on issues in more depth, and was perhaps more alert to misconceptions or distortions of Islam and Muslims within the articles. It is also

possible that these misconceptions, distortions, or instances of prejudice directed at Muslims in the data evoked a stronger reaction from me than they would have for someone else. At times I felt I was trying too hard to justify or denounce particular positionings or constructions of Muslims. But at other times, I felt the need to explain, defend, or provide an authentic Muslim perspective, especially in light of Said's (1978) explanation that groups such as Muslims are more liable to technical and ideological constructions because their concepts, peoples, and cultures are poorly known.

This 'authentic perspective', or bias, was again present in my analysis and discussion on Muslim women. This is because of my own identity as a Muslim woman, but also because I recently started wearing the headscarf myself. For me, the practice of *hijab* was yet another act of worship that I could do in obedience to God. When done properly, I feel the practice of *hijab* guards against vanity based on physical appearance, encourages decency and modesty in behaviour, and provides a space for contemplation. My decision to adopt the *hijab* was therefore based solely on a desire to obey God and to realise the values of humility, decency and consciousness that Islam encourages. This possibly influenced my decision to show that the practice of *hijab* by Muslim women is done for reasons other than cultural or political ones. I have also since come to appreciate the *hijab* as multi-faceted in meaning. For one, it outwardly affirms my Muslim identity. That said though, I do not consider the headscarf to be the most important part of my identity, nor of my faith. In wearing the headscarf, I also experienced this as an act of agency. I was at university and made the decision on my own without any patriarchal or familial influence. For this reason, I found discussions on Muslim women to be incredibly reductive and essentialist, reducing them to little more than their clothing and/or their experience of gendered oppression.

I am aware that my lived experience of Islam is unique. For one, I have never had any exposure to 'extremists' or 'fundamentalists' and prior to this study did not know much about 'political Islam' and 'Islamists'. I have also not experienced any prejudice or victimisation based on my religious beliefs. I have however, experienced prejudice based on my ethnicity. I am Zimbabwean by birth, but of Indian descent, and as a result have always lived as part of a minority group. Living in Zimbabwe my Indian identity has always had more resonance for others than my religious and national identities, whereas the reverse is true for me, and this

has made me aware of the inconsistencies between internal and external definitions of identity. Being able to identify myself as female, Muslim, Indian and Zimbabwean has also made me aware of the complexities of identity formation. And finally, growing up and living in Zimbabwe, and now studying in South Africa, I am alert to the histories of colonialism and apartheid, and how deeply institutionalised racism or prejudice can become entrenched.

6.6 Reflecting on the writing of a research report

A final criterion of reflexivity suggested by Harper (1999) is that of linearity. As discussed earlier, when doing discourse analysis, discourses do not come “neatly packaged”, and so the researcher is required to construct a linear, coherent argument from the data (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 74). In doing this, the researcher has to produce a plausible, persuasive written account, but in putting together a well-grounded argument, there is always the acknowledgment that much is left out (Harper, 1999). As such any report produced is considered partial and subjective, and implicit in this is the realisation that it is only one way of seeing things (Harper, 1999). Keeping these points in mind, I ask that this research study be read as a single account. And without making any claims to truth, it is hoped that through outlining the personal biases that I brought to the reading of texts an authentic, honest approach to the research has been achieved.

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8. Appendix A: Newspaper Articles

Article for Extract 1

Radical Muslim jailed for calling for jihad against MPs

Judge describes Bilal Zaheer Ahmad as a viper in our midst before jailing him for 12 years for threats on websites

- Caroline Davies
- guardian.co.uk, Friday 29 July 2011 20.08 BST

An IT graduate who wrote messages on an Islamic extremist website calling on Muslims to "raise the knife of jihad" and attack and kill British MPs who voted in favour of the war in Iraq has been jailed for 12 years.

Bilal Zaheer Ahmad, 24, posted the threats on the US-based RevolutionMuslim.com website with a full list of all MPs who had voted in the House of Commons in favour of the war and links providing personal contact details.

He called on them to emulate Roshonara Choudhry, who had attempted to murder the Labour MP Stephen Timms with a knife at his East Ham constituency surgery six months previously, Bristol crown court heard.

Ahmad, who worked for an insurance company in Telford, Shropshire, also posted a link to the Tesco website listing cheap knives, urging would-be fanatics to use them to carry out attacks.

Jailing him for 12 years, with an additional five years' extended period on licence, Mr Justice Royce said: "You became a viper in our midst willing to go as far as possible to strike at the heart of our system."

Ahmad, who holds British and Pakistani passports, had purported to be a British citizen, said Royce. "But what you stand for is totally alien to what we stand for in our country." He added that his views were "corrosively dangerous".

"It's important MPs can hold constituency surgeries without the threat of someone pulling out a knife and trying to kill them. You were intent on striking at the heart of our democracy and if our politicians are to be at risk from those like you, then the message must go out loud and clear that this country will not tolerate such threats to its democratic processes."

Ahmad posted his threat on 3 November, the day after Choudhry, a 21-year-old university student, was jailed for life for the knife attack on Timms in May last year. She stabbed him twice with a six-inch knife, damaging his liver and perforating his stomach. She later said she had been influenced by the radical sermons of Anwar al-Awlaki, a Yemen-based preacher and al-Qaida leader.

Police arrested Ahmad, at the time living in Dunstall, Wolverhampton, on 10 November. He pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to soliciting murder, publishing written material with intent to stir up religious hatred and three counts under Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000, which covers collecting information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.

Mark Dennis QC, prosecuting, said as well as providing the list of MPs he advised "that the best place to 'encounter them in person' was at their constituency surgery". He attached a link to The book of Jihad, a source of inspiration for Choudhry, calling for a renewed attack upon Timms and the "destruction" of not only the MP but also the judge who sentenced Choudhry.

The website was an established source of information for Muslims holding extreme views and those who wanted to carry out their threats, added Dennis.

The day before Choudhry was sentenced Ahmad posted on Facebook: "This sister has put us men to shame. WE SHOULD BE DOING THIS."

On arrest, Ahmad confessed responsibility for the posting. He said: "I shouldn't have let my emotions get away from me. It was completely irrational. It was tongue in cheek, I'm not in a cell or anything like that."

Dennis said: "He claimed that he had never intended to incite anyone to injure anyone else."

Ahmad, now of Wollaton, Nottingham, was born in Warwickshire and studied for A-levels at Wolverhampton College. He became radicalised as a teenager and was an active contributor to RevolutionMuslim, Islam4UK and IslamicAwakening websites. He graduated from the University of Central England with a 2:2 degree in business information technology and worked for a year as a junior development analyst at the Dorset County hospital in Dorchester.

The court heard he had also posted on Facebook a link to YouTube where he recorded a video saying: "My message to the West. You are all going to die." He was in possession of electronic copies of books called 39 ways to serve and participate in jihad and Zaad-e-Mujahid: Essential provisions of a mujahadid as well as a magazine, Inspire, which instructs English-speaking young Muslims in how to train and organise violent jihad at home.

Imran Khan, defending, said Ahmad had fallen in with members of al-Muhajiroun when aged 16 at college because he felt excluded from mainstream society. His growing interest in Islam had been at odds with the non-religious upbringing of his parents.

"During the period that someone has been indoctrinated they lose the ability to know right from wrong.

"It was wrong, it was perverted and it's one he now absolves himself from completely. He was a follower and not a leader," said Khan.

Article for Extract 2

White Muslim one of six arrested over 'terror plot'

White Muslim convert Richard Dart and a former police community support officer were among six people arrested for allegedly plotting a terror attack in Britain.

By Tom Whitehead, Martin Evans and Sam Marsden

10:00PM BST 05 Jul 2012

Richard Dart, who was radicalised by the cleric Anjem Choudary, was held following police raids in east and west London.

A former PCSO and two of his brothers, who were living just over a mile from the Olympic site in Stratford, were also among those detained during the police and MI5 operation to prevent a suspected terror assault.

One of the brothers was Tasered by officers. Counter-terrorism police had first searched their home last November.

The Daily Telegraph understands the police moved over fears that a group had obtained a sword which could potentially be used in a terrorist attack.

Mr Dart, 29, the son of Dorset teachers, featured in a BBC documentary last year filmed by his own brother about his conversion. During the film, called *My Brother the Islamist*, he was seen protesting about British soldiers in Afghanistan and accused them of being "murderers".

He also called for Sharia law to be established in Britain, as well as saying that one of his friends used to be "in the police", but is not any more. Mr Dart has changed his name to Salahuddin al Britani. Salahuddin comes from the medieval leader who drove King Richard I from Jerusalem during the Crusades.

It emerged last year that the former BBC security guard was living off state benefits in a luxury flat in Mile End, east London.

Anjem Choudary said he had converted Mr Dart but had not been in contact with him for more than a year.

The six, which included one woman, were arrested on suspicion of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism after police raids during the early hours of Thursday, July 5.

Neighbours in Stratford said one of the brothers was Jahangir Alom, 26, who served as a former Metropolitan community support officer between May 2007 and September 2009. He is understood to also go under the name of Abu Khalid.

In 2010, Mr Khalid appeared in a YouTube video to say why he had stopped being a PCSO and had become an Islamic fundamentalist.

In the film he explains that he realized he was leading a “misguided” life after meeting with some “brothers”. He said as a PCSO he was involved in stop and searches and that he now realised he was “implementing kuffur (enemies of Islam) law on the streets of London”.

The other two brothers arrested are understood to be Mohammed Alomgir, 24, and Moybur Alom, 18. Mr Alomgir was hit with a police Taser during the arrests but did not require hospital treatment.

At the same time, in Ealing, west London, a 29-year-old man, believed to be Mr Dart, was arrested in the street, while a 21-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman were held at separate residential premises.

Police insisted that the arrests were not linked to the Olympics and that an attack was not believed to be imminent.

The suspects had been monitored by counter-terrorism officers and MI5 for some time and the arrests were part of a pre-planned intelligence operation.

Mr Dart’s stepfather Thomas Leech, speaking from the family’s home in Weymouth, Dorset, confirmed that Mr Dart had been arrested but said the family did not wish to comment further.

In Stratford, another neighbour said that the three brothers had been “getting more religious throughout the years”. Another said he was “confused” because the “big one” used to be a PCSO, so the events had left him “very surprised”.

Neighbours said the father of the family had left their mother to bring up three sons and one daughter on her own.

During the raid at the Abbey Road address in Stratford, the front door of the house was smashed, leaving debris lying on the doorstep and a red curtain draped over the entrance. Police erected a blue tent in front of the door as officers visited and left the property throughout the day.

A neighbour said the street lights had been extinguished and the road blocked off to traffic just before the arrest.

He said: “It seemed like it was synchronised by the police. There were no sirens. However, at around 4.10am we heard a big blast. I saw from the window that the door of the house flew off.

“It wasn’t a battering ram that the police used, it was an explosion that went, ‘bang’ four times. It was dark. The only thing I could see was the officers all in black in helmets and with riot shields.”

Reje Rahman, 32, a child protection worker, said her 12-year-old daughter was so scared by the raid that she “couldn’t get to sleep afterwards” and thought that the “building was going to collapse”.

Article for extracts 3 and 4

David Cameron tells Muslim Britain: stop tolerating extremists

PM says those who don't hold 'British' values will be shunned by government

- Patrick Wintour
- The Guardian, Saturday 5 February 2011

David Cameron will today signal a sea-change in the government fight against home-grown terrorism, saying the state must confront, and not consort with, the non-violent Muslim groups that are ambiguous about British values such as equality between sexes, democracy and integration.

To belong in Britain is to believe in these values, he will say. Claiming the previous government had been the victim of fear and muddled thinking by backing a state-sponsored form of multiculturalism, the prime minister will state that his government "will no longer fund or share platforms with organisations that, while non-violent, are certainly in some cases part of the problem".

In a major speech to a security conference in Munich, he will demand: "We need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism."

He will say that "some organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community are showered with public money while doing little to combat extremism. This is like turning to a rightwing fascist party to fight a violent white supremacist movement."

Cameron's aides, aware the speech may prove highly controversial, refused to identify the organisations in his sights, but it is clear one target is the Muslim Council of Britain.

Last night some Muslim groups criticised the prime minister for making the speech on the same day that the English Defence League is holding its biggest ever demonstration, in Luton.

Cameron will also make clear that his tougher stance extends to unambiguous support for the democracy movement in Egypt: "I simply don't accept that there's a dead-end choice between a security state and Islamist resistance."

His remarks suggest that a Home Office-led review into the government Prevent programme, being overseen by Lord Carlile, is going to lead to major changes.

It also suggests that he has sided unambiguously with figures such as Michael Gove inside his cabinet rather than his party chairman, Lady Warsi, who has complained of fashionable Islamophobia.

Cameron will argue many young men have been drawn to extremism due to a rootlessness created by the weakening of a clear collective British cultural identity.

He will say: "Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong.

"We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. So when a white person holds objectionable views – racism, for example – we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices have come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious, frankly even fearful, to stand up to them."

He will warn his audience: "Europe needs to wake up to what is happening in our own countries. We need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of these terrorist attacks lie – and that is the existence of an ideology, Islamist extremism."

This ideology he says, is entirely separate from Islam, and "at the furthest end includes those who back terrorism to promote their ultimate goal: an entire Islamist realm, governed by an interpretation of sharia".

But he adds: "Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist world-view including real hostility towards western democracy and liberal values.

"If we are to defeat this threat, he says, its time to turn the page on on the failed policies of the past. So first, instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we as governments and societies have got to confront it in all its forms."

Echoing Tony Blair after 9/11, he rounds on the soft left that "lump all Muslims together, compiling a list of grievances and arguing if only governments addressed them, this terrorism would stop".

Inayat Bunglawala, chair of an anti-extremist group called Muslims4Uk, said: "Mr Cameron's remarks are ill-judged and deeply patronising. The overwhelming majority of UK Muslims are proud to be British and are appalled by the antics of a tiny group of extremists and so will hardly be pleased with his lecture on integration.

"Ironically, the PM's comments come on a day when the viciously Islamophobic English Defence League are to stage their biggest demonstration yet on our streets. Integration works both ways and we would expect Mr Cameron and his government to be openly challenging these EDL extremists. Instead, he and his senior ministers have to date remained totally mute. It is disgraceful."

In opposition the Tories began considering the policy on Muslims, which critics say risks branding many as extremists even though they do not espouse violence.

Critics say it is based on flawed neo-Conservative thinking and risks backfiring, while supporters say it is necessary to tackle those who are fellow travellers with violent extremists.

Article for Extract 5

Cameron's scapegoating will have a chilling, toxic impact

Blaming Islamists and multiculturalism for the backlash from US and British wars risks fuelling violence on the streets

- Seumas Milne
- guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 9 February 2011 21.30 GMT

In parts of Britain, Muslims are effectively under siege. They are routinely spat at and abused in the street. Over the past couple of months there have been arson and other attacks on mosques in Hemel Hempstead, Leicester, Scunthorpe, Stoke and Kingston, as well as desecration of a Muslim graveyard and fire-bombing of a halal shop.

Most of these outrages weren't even reported in the national media, let alone the occasion for a supportive visit from a government minister. As elsewhere in Europe, far-right organisations such as the British National party have increasingly switched the focus of their hatred from Jews and migrant populations in general to Muslims. More than half the "significant demonstrations" in the past 18 months, according to the Inspectorate of Constabulary, were mounted by the English Defence League, which only targets Muslims, smashing shop windows and assaulting passers-by whenever it manages to break through police lines in mainly Muslim areas.

As the Conservative party chairwoman Sayeeda Warsi said last month – and was roundly abused for doing so – Islamophobia has also "now crossed the threshold of middle-class respectability". It is the last socially acceptable form of bigotry, often dressed up in the clothes of liberalism.

So when the EDL organised a "homecoming" march last weekend in Luton, did the prime minister use the opportunity to condemn the racially inflamed provocation of a gang of Muslim-baiters and show solidarity with fellow British citizens under threat? Not a bit of it. He didn't even mention what was going on in Luton. Speaking the same day in Munich, of all places, he turned his fire instead on "Islamists", "state multiculturalism" and "non-violent extremists" in the Muslim community.

Muslims must embrace "British" values of freedom, democracy and equal rights, he declared, as if the vast majority didn't do so already. Jihadist terror attacks were not driven by British and US wars in the Muslim world, he insisted – in the face of his own intelligence reports – but by an "extremist ideology" rooted in problems of "identity".

And, grotesquely comparing non-violent Islamists to "rightwing fascists", he warned that there would be a strict checklist of Muslim bodies the government would not now work with or fund (including the umbrella Muslim Council of Britain). He did criticise Islamophobia, but that passing comment was drowned out by the drumbeat of condemnation targeted at Muslims and their political organisations.

Not surprisingly his speech has been hailed by the far right. The BNP leader Nick Griffin called it a "huge leap for our ideas into the political mainstream". EDL activists, who constantly echo the established political and media discourse about "extremism", and "Islamism", were jubilant that Cameron had "come round to our way of thinking".

It also represents a decisive and dangerous victory for the neoconservative group in the Tory leadership, including Michael Gove, William Hague, George Osborne and Liam Fox. Backed by the government-funded Quilliam Foundation and their media cheerleaders, the neocons have pressed tirelessly to end residual official engagement with mainstream nonviolent Islamist groups, hitherto aimed at isolating the genuinely extreme groups actually in the business of blowing up buses and tubes.

On the other side, one-nation Tories and Liberal Democrats such as Warsi, Dominic Grieve and Nick Clegg have tried to hold the line for a more inclusive approach towards the kind of Muslim political activism you might imagine would be welcome in the prime minister's world of British values.

Cameron himself warned three years ago about the "lazy" use of terms such as "Islamist" that risked demonising the Muslim community, as Warsi did about "extremism". He's now carried out a U-turn, just in time to give a dog whistle to Tory supporters drifting away under the barrage of coalition cuts – and to a party for the most part yet to come to terms with multicultural Britain at all.

The silence from the Lib Dems, who dined off Muslim votes in the aftermath of the Iraq war, has been deafening. Labour's Sadiq Khan accused Cameron of "writing propaganda for the EDL", but much of the ground for Cameron's neocon turn was laid by Tony Blair and New Labour – and politicians such as Phil Woolas, who unsuccessfully tried to play the Islamophobic card to save his skin.

By blaming the threat of terrorism on multiculturalism, Cameron has signalled that ethnic minority policy will now be driven by an alarmingly skewed conception of state security. By groundlessly claiming that "we" have held back from condemning forced marriages among Muslims because they're not white, he's feeding racist prejudice.

And by branding political Islam as extremist, he's playing on the ignorance of those for whom Muslim and Islamist are as good as indistinguishable. What is called Islamism includes a wide spectrum of political trends, peaceful and violent, socially conservative and progressive, from Turkey's ruling party to al-Qaida. Mainstream Islamists, certainly including almost all the groups Cameron is now casting into outer darkness, are in fact committed to democratic freedoms.

What Cameron and the bulk of the British political class cannot acknowledge is that their continued support for the war on terror and occupation of Afghanistan, far from keeping the streets safe, is the crucial factor in the continuing threat of terrorism in Britain.

The revolutionary upheavals taking place in Tunisia and Egypt should offer the western powers a chance to change direction. After all, backing for despots across the Arab worlds such as Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak has long been one of the central grievances at the heart of Islamist (and nationalist) politics, in the region and beyond. It would be bizarre if just as the British and other western governments are having to come to

terms with Islamist movements in the Middle East, they were treating their counterparts at home as enemies of the state.

The practical policy consequences of Cameron's neocon turn may be modest. But its wider impact is likely to be chilling and poisonous. If the government's message is that peaceful independent Muslim political activism is beyond the pale, it won't just be regarded as hypocritical and undemocratic – it will strengthen the hand of those committed to violence.

Article for Extract 6

Egyptian Islamists put sharia law on agenda after election gains

Muslim Brotherhood and radical Salafists appear to take majority of seats in first round of Egypt's parliamentary elections

- Associated Press
- guardian.co.uk, Friday 2 December 2011 18.33 GMT

Egypt's Islamist party plans to push for a stricter religious code after claiming strong gains in the first round of parliamentary elections.

Islamists led by the Muslim Brotherhood and radical Salafists appear to have taken a majority of seats in the first round of Egypt's first parliamentary vote since the ousting of Mubarak.

Egypt's election commission announced few results, but said turnout was 62%, the highest in the country's modern history.

Leaked preliminary counts indicated that the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm took the largest share of votes. Following closely behind was the ultra-conservative Islamist Nour party and a liberal coalition, according to unofficial counts.

Spokesman Youssef Hamad said the Salafi Nour party, which wants sharia law to be an integral part of Egypt's new constitution, expected to get 30% of the vote and was leading the polls in the rural Nile delta province of Kafr el-Sheik, known for high rates of illiteracy and poverty, and in parts of its longtime stronghold of Alexandria.

Hamad said the party faced its toughest challenge in Cairo because of the small presence of Salafi supporters there but polling elsewhere has put it in a strong position to influence policy, although it's unclear how much power the new parliament will have with the ruling generals still in power. Hamad said his party was willing to co-operate with secular, liberal and Islamist forces "if it will serve the interest of the nation".

As votes were being counted in nine provinces, accounting for about 30% of the 498 seats in parliament's lower house, anti-military protests continued in Cairo. Two more rounds, ending in January, will cover Egypt's other 18 provinces.

The new parliament, in theory, will select a 100-member panel to draft Egypt's new constitution.

The al-Nour party is the main political arm of the hard-line Salafi movement which, unlike the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood, is a new player on Egypt's political scene.

Guided by a Saudi-inspired school of thought, Salafists have long shunned the concept of democracy, saying it allows man's law to override God's. But they decided to form parties and enter politics after the exit of Mubarak in February.

Salafi groups speak confidently about their ambition to turn Egypt into a state where personal freedoms, including freedom of speech, women's dress and art, are constrained by sharia.

"In the land of Islam, I can't let people decide what is permissible or what is prohibited. It's God who gives the answers as to what is right and what is wrong," Hamad said. "If God tells me you can drink whatever you want except for alcohol, you don't leave the million things permitted and ask about the prohibited."

The showing in Egypt, long considered a linchpin of regional stability, would be the clearest signal yet that parties and candidates connected to political Islam will emerge as the main beneficiaries of the Arab spring.

Tunisia and Morocco have both elected Islamist majorities to parliament and, while Libya has yet to announce dates for its first elections, Islamist groups have emerged as a strong force since rebels overthrew Muammar Gaddafi in August. They also play a strong opposition role in Yemen

Article for Extract 7

Nigerian president admits Islamists have secret backers in government

Goodluck Jonathan says Boko Haram violence is country's greatest security threat since 1967 civil war

- Monica Mark
- guardian.co.uk, Monday 9 January 2012 18.32 GMT

The Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, has confirmed for the first time that the Islamist group Boko Haram has secret backers among government and security officials.

Jonathan said Boko Haram presents Nigeria's greatest security challenge since the 1967 Biafra civil war, when a three-year campaign by the Igbo people to secede from the country's 150 other tribes left a million dead.

The organisation, whose name means "non-Islamic education is sacrilege", is fighting to impose a strict interpretation of sharia law across Africa's most populous country. A simmering low-level insurgency erupted on Christmas Day with four co-ordinated attacks that killed at least 30 people as they poured out of church services. Since then, a spree of violence at churches has claimed dozens of lives, prompting a state of emergency in the group's northern homebase states and threatening to ignite a sectarian conflict in a country split evenly between Muslims and Christians.

"During the civil war we knew and we could even predict where the enemy was coming from. But the challenge we have today is more complicated," Jonathan said.

Now, Boko Haram backers and sympathisers are "in the executive arm of the government; some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of the government, while some are even in the legislative arm. Some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies," he said at a three-day literary service attended by authors Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka.

Achebe and Soyinka, both giants of the Nigerian literary scene, urged the population to refrain from retaliatory attacks amid reports of Christians fleeing the north, where Muslims are a majority, and vice-versa.

But less than a day later, they took to the streets along with tens of thousands of ordinary citizens to protest at the end to fuel subsidies in the oil-rich state – highlighting the other key challenge faced by state officials.

As a labour union strike and huge protests paralysed much of the country, analysts said Jonathan's admission was worrying given the size of the security budget, which this year was \$5.7bn.

"The security angle explains why the group are often one step ahead of the government. It is also one of the reasons why members of the group have been floating around freely. The population are afraid to step forward as they think their security can't be guaranteed by

security officials," said Shehu Sani, who heads the Civil Rights Congress of Nigeria and maintains close contact with the group.

In December, the US Congress said the group had morphed from homegrown criminals into terrorists capable of forging international links. Members of the group claim to have travelled to Somalia to share techniques and funding with al-Shabaab militants.

Article for Extract 8

Muslims 'must embrace democracy' says David Cameron

Muslims must embrace democracy and respect the rights of Christians around the world, David Cameron will say.

By Rowena Mason, Political Correspondent, in Jakarta

6:30AM BST 12 Apr 2012

Speaking in Indonesia, the world's largest Islamic country, the Prime Minister will urge young Muslims to abandon "the dead-end choice of dictatorship and extremism" by forcing their countries to hold elections.

He will claim it would be "the greatest defeat that Al Qaeda could ever suffer," if more rebel and follow the lead of the young Muslims who sparked the Arab Spring.

Mr Cameron will express his concern for the rights of millions of Christians, especially in Egypt, where the Coptic minority say they are facing increasing persecution. In a strong rebuke to Egypt's powerful Muslim Brotherhood party, Mr Cameron will demand it does not "deny the rights of religious minorities who do not share their specific religious views".

Egypt's Coptic community, which accounts for 10 per cent of the country's 80 million population, has been subjected to a continuous campaign of sectarian attacks since the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak last February. Thirteen were killed last May and another 10 two months before in attacks by suspected Islamists.

Addressing students at Al Azhar University, Mr Cameron will use Indonesia as an example of how Islam and democracy can go hand in hand. The country became a democracy in 1998 after years of a military dictatorship. It has successfully fought extremism since a bomb in Bali killed more than 200 in 2002.

While praising Indonesia's efforts to modernise, he will argue that there are still four big "opponents who threaten our shared interests" – authoritarian leaders, corrupt elites, extremists and tribalists.

He will say democracy has the ability to defeat these "dangerous foes", such as the murderous authoritarian regime in Syria, even though they will "do everything in their power to defeat us".

Mr Cameron will become the first Western leader to visit Myanmar since the country began to open up. Ahead of his historic visit, the Prime Minister will pay tribute in the speech to its president, Thein Sein, for paving the way for free elections.

He will also praise the "inspirational" Aung San Suu Kyi, the democracy campaigner who has been voted into parliament after many years under house arrest.

Mr Cameron will face an awkward situation during the visit, as he will take business leaders to Myanmar despite sanctions prohibiting trade with the Asian country.

The chief executives will have to be treated “like tourists”, rather than taking part in meetings.

Before heading to Myanmar, the Prime Minister will make a stop in Malaysia to promote British business, especially education, as many British universities have campuses in the country.

Malaysia, once a British colony, had a slogan of “Buy British last” in the 1980s after a row over trade — the Prime Minister will be working hard to overturn any negative sentiment that might remain.

Article for Extract 9

Christian worker loses her job after being 'targeted' by Islamic extremists

A Christian worker has launched a landmark legal action after she lost her job when she blew the whistle on what she says was a campaign of "race hate" by fundamentalist Muslims.

Jonathan Wynne-Jones, Religious Affairs Correspondent

7:30AM GMT 27 Nov 2011

Nohad Halawi, who worked at Heathrow Airport, is suing her former employers for unfair dismissal, claiming that she and other Christian staff at the airport were victims of systematic harassment because of their religion.

She claims that she was told that she would go to Hell for her religion, that Jews were responsible for the September 11th terror attacks, and that a friend was reduced to tears having been bullied for wearing a cross.

Mrs Halawi, who came to Britain from Lebanon in 1977, worked in the duty-free section as a perfume saleswoman of the airport for 13 years but was dismissed in July.

Her case is being supported by the Christian Legal Centre, who say it raises important legal issues and also questions over whether Muslims and Christians are treated differently by employers.

It comes amid growing concern among some Christians that their faith is being marginalised and follows calls from Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, for Christians to be given greater legal protection in the wake of a series of cases where they have been disciplined or dismissed for practising their faith.

It also raises further questions over race relations at Heathrow Airport.

Last week, Arie Zucker, a Jewish businessman, complained that he has been repeatedly singled out for full-body scans by Muslim security staff at the airport.

The 41-year-old mortgage broker from London has accused them of "race hate" and is threatening to sue for racial discrimination after being made to "feel like a criminal" while being scanned.

Mrs Halawi's case centres on whether she was treated unfairly when she lost her job in World Duty Free in Terminal 3 after she spoke out over what she described as bullying and intimidation by her Muslim colleagues of her and other Christians.

She said that she was the subject of a complaint by an Islamic colleague which was specious and that when she raised her own concerns as a Christian, she was the one who was dismissed.

Now she is distraught at losing her job on allegations made by what she describes as a small group of "extremist" Muslims.

Mrs Halawi, 47, said: "I have been sacked on the basis of unsubstantiated complaints so there is now great fear amongst my former colleagues that the same could happen to them if one of the Muslims turns on them.

"This is supposed to be a Christian country, but the law seems to be on the side of the Muslims."

A mother of two, she says that she had always got on well with her Muslim colleagues and relations between staff of different faiths had been good in the past, but that the atmosphere became increasingly uncomfortable with a growing number of employees espousing "fundamentalist Islam".

She says they harassed Christians at work by making fun of them for wearing crosses, ridiculing Jesus and telling them they would go to Hell if they did not convert to Islam.

"One man brought in the Koran to work and insisted I read it and another brought in Islamic leaflets and handed them out to other employees," she said.

"They said that 9/11 served the Americans right and that they hated the West, but that they had come here because they want to convert people to Islam.

"They say that Jesus is s***** [shitty] and bullied a Christian friend of mine so much for wearing her crosses that she came to me crying."

Mrs Halawi says she was targeted by the fundamentalists after she stood up for her friend, who is 62 and who she is keeping anonymous because she still works at the terminal.

In May, five of her Muslim colleagues complained to David Tunnicliffe, the trading manager at World Duty Free, accusing her of being anti-Islamic following a heated conversation in the store.

The row had stemmed from her description of a Muslim colleague as an allawhi, which means 'man of God' in Arabic. Another Muslim overheard this and thought she said Alawi, which was his branch of Islam.

Following the complaints she was suspended immediately, but was not told the grounds for her suspension until she met Mr Tunnicliffe in July.

Two days after the meeting she received a letter, which said the "store approval" - the Heathrow security pass - needed to work at World Duty Free was being removed because her behaviour was deemed to be unacceptable.

"I believe that the breakdown in relationship between yourself and some of your colleagues has contributed to this situation and has led to a number of inappropriate conversations taking place," the letter said.

"Whilst I do not believe that you may have meant to be offensive, I believe that it was not unreasonable for the individuals who either heard these comments, or who they were directed at to find them offensive, and they are extremely inappropriate."

However, the only comments she made which Mr Tunncliffe claimed were offensive relate to her accusing a Muslim colleague of having "extremist leaflets" and asking another Muslim why Jesus was being described as "s*****".

She was paid on a freelance basis by Caroline South Associates, a fragrance and cosmetics agency that provides staff to work in World Duty Free, and was told that she would not be able to continue working without her pass.

A petition signed by 28 colleagues, some of them Muslims, argued that she has been dismissed on the basis of "malicious lies", but failed to see her reinstated.

Andrea Minichiello Williams, founder and director of the Christian Legal Centre, said that the case is one of the most serious they have handled.

"It raises huge issues," she said.

"First, there is the level of Islamic fundamentalism prevalent at our main point of entry to the UK.

"Then there are very real issues of religious discrimination, which it would appear those in authority are turning a blind eye to, using the current loop-holes in employment law as an excuse."

The centre has instructed Paul Diamond, a leading human rights barrister, to represent Mrs Halawi in taking both Caroline South Associates and Autogrill Retail UK Limited, which trades as World Duty Free, to an employment tribunal.

They hope that the case will set a precedent for thousands of people like Mrs Halaoui who would appear to be employees from the working relationship, but actually have no rights because of their self-employed status.

A lawyer acting for CSA said: "The case is still pending so the company is not in a position to comment, but as far as the company is concerned she's never been an employee and has never been dismissed."

A spokesman for World Duty Free said they were unable to comment because the matter is subject to "ongoing legal proceedings".

Article for Extract 10

Tablighi Jamaat mosque accused of encouraging Muslim isolationism

The Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat, which is fighting to keep its east London mosque, is described as a supremacist movement at a planning inquiry

- Riazat Butt, religious affairs correspondent
- guardian.co.uk, Friday 18 February 2011 18.32 GMT

An Islamic group fighting to keep its east London mosque, near to the Olympics site, has been described by opponents as a "supremacist movement" that encourages isolationism from wider British society.

Tablighi Jamaat, a global proselytising movement with tens of thousands of members in the UK, is trying to overturn an enforcement notice on its mosque, called the Riverine Centre, after temporary planning permission expired in 2006.

A planning inquiry at Newham town hall will determine whether the group can continue to use the modest collection of buildings. On Thursday it heard that followers of Tablighi Jamaat were taught to "shun integration with all unbelievers in order to be uncontaminated Muslims and to isolate themselves from wider society".

According to evidence from Dr Taj Hargey, an imam who runs a progressive Islamic educational centre in Oxford, the "isolationist dynamic" of Tablighi Jamaat has caused the growth of a "separatist Muslim enclave" in the streets around its Dewsbury headquarters.

Hargey was called as a witness by Newham Concern, a local campaign group which has long opposed Tablighi Jamaat and its ambitions to expand its facilities. The group is behind plans to build a much larger facility at the site, dubbed a "megamosque" by the media, although it currently has no planning application in place.

Hargey told the inquiry that Tablighi Jamaat had "achieved very little for the community" and rejected the group's assertions that closing the mosque would lead to the marginalisation of Muslim youth.

He said: "Over the past 14 years that TJ has occupied the site it has furnished no proven track record of opening their facilities to the wider Muslim community, let alone non-Muslim community. In that time they have not even managed to create any facilities for women. The facility itself currently contributes substantially to marginalisation". He described it as a "supremacist movement with adverse implications for the government's community cohesion policies".

Newham Concern also called Tehmina Kazi, from the group British Muslims for Secular Democracy, as a witness.

Kazi, speaking in a personal capacity, said the government's national planning policy sought to promote "mixed and balanced communities" and that Tablighi Jamaat was "particularly

inward-looking" because it only engaged with other Muslims. "The main issue is not that they are a socially conservative movement, but the fact they have been reluctant to engage in dialogue with people who are different."

Newham council has said it wants to shut the mosque down over concerns about traffic levels, land contamination and visual impact.

The inquiry continues.

Article for Extracts 11 and 29

British Muslims must step outside this anti-war comfort zone

British Muslims have too long defined politics by the Middle East. We have an obligation to engage with the national debate

- Mehdi Hasan
- The Guardian, Monday 2 April 2012

It was the Muslims wot won it. To pretend otherwise is naive if not disingenuous. George Galloway could not have triumphed in the Bradford West byelection, with the biggest swing in modern British political history, had it not been for the loud, passionate and overwhelming support of the constituency's big Muslim population. "All praise to Allah!" the new Respect party MP gratefully proclaimed, via loudspeaker, to his supporters on Saturday.

The British Muslim community has had a tortured relationship with politicians in recent years. That it has become a cliché to say that young British Muslims are alienated, estranged and marginalised from the political process doesn't make it any less true. Muslims are woefully under-represented in public life: the number of Muslim MPs, for instance, stands at eight out of 650.

Ironically, Labour's candidate in the Bradford West byelection, Imran Hussain, was on the verge of becoming the ninth such MP. But Hussain seems to have been out-Muslimled by the Catholic Galloway. "God KNOWS who is a Muslim," said a leaflet sent out to voters. "And he KNOWS who is not. Instinctively, so do you ... I, George Galloway, do not drink alcohol and never have. Ask yourself if you believe the other candidate in this election can say that truthfully."

The Respect party leader, Salma Yacoub, tells me this leaflet was a response to a smear campaign by the local Labour party, allegedly telling Bradford's Muslims not to vote for Galloway because he was a *sharabi* ("drunk").

But there is a much bigger question at stake here: why is it that most British Muslims get so excited and aroused by foreign affairs, yet seem so bored by and uninterested in domestic politics and the economy?

From the march against the Iraq war in 2003 to the demonstrations against the Danish cartoons in 2006 and the protests against Israel's attack on Gaza in 2009, British Muslims have shown themselves perfectly willing to take to the streets to make their voices heard. But how many times have they, individually or collectively, joined rallies over issues that affect our daily lives: from the reforms of the NHS to the future of local schools; from the lack of social housing to rising energy bills and train fares?

It is far too easy to lay the blame for such indifference at the door of community organisations. Yet the much-maligned Muslim Council of Britain, for example, has tried repeatedly to rally support for issues like child poverty and climate change – with little success. The MCB also backed last year's March for the Alternative against the government's spending cuts. But from my own vantage point on the platform at Hyde Park that afternoon, I was disappointed to see few beards or hijabs among the sea of faces in the crowd – despite

the fact that deprived Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities will be hit hardest by the coalition's cuts to public services.

Of course, Galloway has said it was his anti-austerity agenda, not just his anti-war message, that helped him to victory in Bradford West. I have my doubts. Furqan Naeem, chair of the University of Bradford Student Union, says the hundreds of young British Muslim activists who campaigned for the Respect candidate "were oblivious of Galloway's track record beyond the war".

It has been nine years since the attack on Iraq and 11 years since the invasion of Afghanistan. Don't get me wrong: these wars still matter. They are, in the words of Labour's Diane Abbott, "unforgotten and unforgiven". But for how long will they continue to be the only or even the deciding factor whenever an election is held in a seat with a big Muslim population?

It isn't just a combination of anti-terror laws and media demonisation that has hindered efforts at Muslim integration into mainstream British society. So, too, has the reluctance of many British Muslims to step outside the political comfort zone of the anti-war movement. When we only talk of foreign affairs, is it any wonder that we seem to come across as foreigners?

Muslims do not lack for opponents or antagonists; those who want to portray us as foreign, alien, un-British, are growing in number. We should not be handing them a club with which to beat us. In fact, the best way of overcoming Islamophobia and suspicion is for British Muslims to broaden, not narrow, our political horizons, to get involved in our local communities, to show our fellow citizens that we care not just about events in Palestine and Pakistan, but Portsmouth and Paisley too.

How can Muslims complain about our rights, our freedoms, our collective future, if we aren't engaged in the political process across the board as active British citizens? We have an obligation, as Britons and as Muslims, to fully participate in local and national debates and not to stand idly by.

We have allowed ourselves to be defined only by foreign policy and, in particular, by events in the Middle East for far too long. British Muslims can make a positive contribution to British society, but first we have to stop our navel-gazing and victim mentality. We must let the people, press and politicians of this country know that we are as British as we are Muslim, and we care about our shared future.

Article for Extract 12

Bill limiting sharia law is motivated by 'concern for Muslim women'

Lady Cox, the proposer, says aim is to prevent discrimination against Muslim women and 'jurisdiction creep' in Islamic tribunals

- Karen McVeigh and Amelia Hill
- guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 8 June 2011 21.06 BST

Islamic courts would be forced to acknowledge the primacy of English law under a bill being introduced in the House of Lords.

The bill, proposed by Lady Cox and backed by women's rights groups and the National Secular Society, was drawn up because of "deep concerns" that Muslim women are suffering discrimination within closed sharia law councils.

The Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill will introduce an offence carrying a five-year jail sentence for anyone falsely claiming or implying that sharia courts or councils have legal jurisdiction over family or criminal law. The bill, which will apply to all arbitration tribunals if passed, aims to tackle discrimination, which its supporters say is inherent in the courts, by banning the sharia practice of giving woman's testimony only half the weight of men's.

Cox said: "Equality under the law is a core value of British justice. My bill seeks to preserve that standard"

In a similar way to Jewish Beth Din courts, sharia tribunals can make verdicts in cases involving financial and property issues which, under the 1996 Arbitration Act, are enforceable by county courts or the high court.

The tribunals should only be deciding civil disputes but two years ago the think-tank Civitas claimed sharia courts, some 85 of which operate in Birmingham, London, Bradford and Manchester, had crossed the proper limits of their jurisdiction and were regularly giving illegal advice on marriage and divorce.

Cox said they are increasingly ruling on family and criminal cases, including child custody and domestic violence. Jurisdiction "creep" had caused considerable suffering among women compelled to return to abusive husbands, or to give up children and property.

Diana Nammi, of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, said: "Women and children are very vulnerable members of the community and under sharia law they become invisible. Women and children are the most vulnerable in minority communities where religion tradition and culture has become the identity taking precedence over the human rights and women's rights that are protected under civil, UK law."

The bill requires public bodies to inform women they have fewer legal rights if their marriage is unrecognised in English law. Cox said she had found "considerable evidence" of women, some of whom are brought to Britain speaking little English and kept ignorant of their legal rights, suffering domestic violence or unequal access to divorce, due to discriminatory

decisions made. "We cannot continue to condone this situation. Many women say: 'We came to this country to escape these practices only to find the situation is worse here.' "

Cox said she would be asking the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who caused a row last year when he said a recognised role for sharia law seemed unavoidable, to back her bill. She said: "By appearing to condone this inherent discrimination system which is causing real suffering to women, he has failed to recognise that suffering. He is appearing to forward the acceptability and validity of Sharia law in this country."

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, said: "Laws should not impinge on religious freedoms, nor should courts judge on theological matters. By the same token, democratically determined and human rights compliant law must take precedence over the law of any religion."

Aina Khan, a solicitor who advises on sharia law, said: "It is good in parts. I would like to see best practice in sharia councils, like in the Beth Din model and I would like some legislation. I don't want somebody opening up a sharia board in their front room. Of course sex discrimination laws must apply. But there are some alarmist tones in the bill. Where she goes wrong is assuming that some sort of misogyny and discrimination goes on. Eighty per cent of its users are women."

Khurshid Drabu, adviser on constitutional affairs to the Muslim Council of Britain, said: "Bills of this kind don't help anybody. They don't appear to understand that we live in a free country where people can make free choices. Yet again, it appears to be a total misunderstanding of the concept that underpins these arbitration councils. Sharia councils operate under consent. If there is a woman who suffers as a result of a decision by one of these councils a woman is free to go to the British courts."

Article for Extracts 13, 17, 18, 30

Why banning the veil would only cover up the real problems for British Muslims

British Muslim women tell Andrew Gilligan why they wear the veil as debate mounts over the French "burka ban".

Andrew Gilligan

9:00PM BST 16 Apr 2011

In some ways, they were like any other young women, waiting at the bus stop for the 25 to Ilford, clutching their mobile phones and small bottles of water. But thanks to Europe's most controversial item of millinery, you could see nothing of Muna Jama and her friend but their eyes.

This was the week that France banned the niqab, the Islamic full-face veil. The law's principal author called it a way to "eradicate [a] minority of fundamentalists" who "instrumentalise Islam for political reasons." President Nicolas Sarkozy said the niqab was "a sign of debasement and subservience;" for another minister, it was a male-imposed "prison." But is any of that true?

The French parliamentary inquiry which recommended the ban lasted six months and heard 211 witnesses. Yet just one of those was a niqab-wearing woman – and even she was seen only after she repeatedly insisted. The commission's report runs to 658 pages. A total of one paragraph is devoted to this woman's testimony.

The Sunday Telegraph decided to do something which virtually nobody involved in the debate, either here or across the Channel, seems to have bothered with – talk to people wearing the niqab and ask them why they do it. The answers may surprise you.

The vast majority of the twenty women I approached on the streets of Tower Hamlets, London's main Muslim area, were more than happy to talk to a non-Muslim man – in several cases, the problem was shutting them up. Most were not stereotypically repressed or un-Westernised, but young and articulate.

From behind the black cloth came, for the most part, accents indistinguishable from those of any other Londoner. Above all, they passionately insisted, nobody had forced them to wear the veil. It was their choice.

"I used to go clubbing, I used to drink, I used to wear skinny jeans," said Ms Jama, who is 28 and from Barking. "But I just got thinking it wasn't right. I had lots of men and I never got anything out of it. They would use me and then leave me. They would look at me like a piece of meat, and this [the niqab] stops all that.

"It is hard in other ways. I live near Essex, and people are sometimes hostile. But it's still better. It gives me confidence."

Ms Jama's friend, who did not want to be named, said: "We do it because there's a higher reward. There's a lot of things [Islamic obligations] we're not capable of doing but we can do this."

Many of the women insisted that wearing the veil was an act not of repression but of self-assertion. "I am doing it to assert my identity as a Muslim," said another young woman, Karima. "My parents hate it, actually. My father keeps threatening to throw me out." I got a strong sense that for at least some of them it was part of finding an identity in the same way that a white teenager might dye her hair or become a goth.

One male Tower Hamlets councillor I talked to described going into a flat on the local Robin Hood Gardens estate, just above the Blackwall Tunnel, and finding a family where the wife was not covered, the elder daughter wore western clothes, but the younger daughter was in the full shroud.

Yet the theological basis for the veil is notoriously shaky. The Quran does not mention it. Most interpretations of the holy book, including the very first, by Imam Tabari, state that "there is a consensus that women are not obliged to cover the face and the hands."

The niqab is banned not just in France, but in Islam's holiest place, Mecca. Women performing the pilgrimage are not allowed to wear it – even though they mix freely with men, and even though it is a strict legal obligation in the rest of Saudi Arabia.

The vast majority of Tower Hamlets Muslims are originally from Bangladesh, an overwhelmingly Muslim country. But the niqab, a Saudi garment, is almost completely unknown there. In supposedly backward, monocultural Dhaka, the capital, you will never see it on the streets. In supposedly liberal, multicultural London, I saw perhaps twenty niqabi women in half an hour.

"I grew up in what people would call a Muslim ghetto, in Rochdale," says Haras Rafiq, director of the moderate Muslim think-tank Centri. "I never even saw a niqab until I was 19. They have grown enormously."

Tower Hamlets is headquarters to a particularly pernicious form of Islamic radicalism. Over us in the Whitechapel Road towered the East London Mosque, funded by Saudi Arabia and controlled by the hardline Islamic Forum of Europe, accused by the local Labour MP of infiltrating his party to further its declared goal of a sharia state in Europe.

One of the IFE's secondary objectives, as a Sunday Telegraph investigation last year established, is to "Islamicise" its area. And though I believed the niqabi women I met when they said they weren't forced, there is no doubt that some others locally do feel strong pressure to conform.

A shopkeeper, who did not want to give her name, said several of her customers, men and women, had verbally attacked her for not covering her head. They had tried to have her dismissed, but her Muslim boss had refused. Last year a local Labour councillor, Shiria Khatun, was the target of an 18-month hate campaign against her "Western" dress, including late-night obscene phone calls and cars following her in the street. No-one has been prosecuted for this.

At the private Madani Girls' School, just off the Whitechapel Road, all the children are forced to wear the niqab. It is a fair bet that some of them do not want to. Ofsted, the education inspectorate, did not mention the compulsory veil-wearing in its report into the school, instead praising it for leaving pupils "well-prepared for life in a multicultural society" – even though the Madani School's own website states that it "opposes the lifestyle of the West".

During the last niqab controversy the Muslim Council of Britain, also dominated by the IFE, endorsed a chilling statement, unreported until now, warning Muslim women that not wearing the veil was a "shortcoming" which may lead to apostasy. It was, they said, an "Islamic practice" which was "not open to debate". All 27 signatories of the statement were male. The MCB was, until recently, treated by ministers as a mainstream interlocutor.

Yet it is still too simplistic to say, as the French have done, that niqab-wearer equals Islamist radical. Many of the niqabi women we spoke to did feel that Islam was under attack – a key element of the Islamist worldview. But this did not usually translate into political activism. "It was not a political thing at all," said one woman. "It was personal." Surprisingly, some of the niqabi women we spoke to did not even go to the mosque. None said they were members of any organisation or group. At best, the niqab is a symptom, not a cause.

"It's a red herring," says Haras Rafiq. "By devoting time and space to it, we're taking our eyes off what really matters."

No-one serious in Britain wants a ban, which is probably just as well.

"A ban would be manna from heaven for the extremists," says Rafiq. "It would reinforce the Islamist claim that society is picking on Muslims. People who don't wear it would take it up as a political cause."

To know that Rafiq is right, you just have to imagine what would happen when the first British woman was jailed for refusing to remove her niqab. "It would be unenforceable, and if it was enforced it would lead to civil unrest," says Peter Golds, the Tory leader in Tower Hamlets, a man with a long track record of opposing local extremists. "It is not for governments to decide what people should wear."

What the women of Tower Hamlets do, perhaps, need is not just the right to cover their heads – but the right not to. That is something that Britain's pusillanimous liberal regulators do not always seem terribly keen on enforcing.

Article for Extract 14

Muslim basketball team shows India that Nagpada girls can jump

Team from wrong side of the Mumbai tracks fight prejudice to compete for title

- Jason Burke
- guardian.co.uk, Friday 18 November 2011 16.35 GMT

In the evening, when the temperature has dropped, it is the girls who take over Nagpada basketball court. A dozen or so, dressed in leggings or long shorts and T-shirts, train hard under the lights. Their efforts will intensify in coming weeks. In January they will face a crucial test: a tournament which for the first time the Nagpada girls' basketball team believe they have a chance of winning.

The girls of Nagpada are making a name for themselves in Mumbai – and in their own tight-knit, Muslim-dominated community. Though boys there have played basketball for decades, few girls ventured on to the court. "A lot of people here in the neighbourhood felt that girls shouldn't play," said Afreen Sheikh Rasheed, 18, one of the team's star players.

"But attitudes are changing now. Some people are proud of us instead of criticising."

The basketball court – one of few such public facilities in the city – is surrounded by makeshift huts where recent migrants live, a rubbish tip and overcrowded tenements. One of the new luxury apartment tower blocks being built all over Mumbai, which has some of the highest real estate prices in the world, overlooks streets where goats scavenge. A handful of battered balls lie in a rusty bin in a corner of the court. A seating area has no seats.

The girls are fiercely protective of their court, however. "These are some of the best facilities in the city. And anyway, it's all we need," said Afreen.

For many years Nagpada has had a reputation as both deeply conservative and crime-ridden. So beyond their neighbourhood too, the girls' team have changed attitudes. Travelling all over the city, they often play teams from private schools – and win. Indian news magazine Tehelka reported one recent game in which they vanquished a team from the wealthy Colaba district "with coloured hair, Nike sneakers and short shorts [who] were no match for the ... Nagpada girls" wearing cheap, locally made trainers.

"At our ground we believe in hard work and discipline. When the training is over, the girls go straight home," said the head coach of the team, businessman Noor Khan.

Afreen and her sister Sumaiya were both encouraged to play by their father, a taxi driver who had been a keen player when he was young. Most of the girls have some family connection to the sport. "My dad dreamed of being a player so he is very happy," Afreen said.

Nida Feroz Khan, whose father is an estate agent, followed her older sister's example. Her grandfather played in Nagpada in the 1950s, she said.

It is unlikely that their chosen sport will bring riches soon. Basketball has been played in India since 1930, but it has always been overshadowed by cricket and hockey. Prize money in

tournaments remains negligible, even for men's teams. Yet, as with many sports here, success can mean a secure state job with the police, army, railways or other agencies which have quotas allowing them to take promising athletes and sportsmen on to their payroll. For girls such as Afreen, Sumaiya and Nida, this means basketball could bring an escape from a life of grinding poverty. Not only does this bring a salary but lodgings too, a huge advantage in overcrowded Mumbai.

"We can get good jobs through [the sport] and that could change everything," said Afreen.

Despite the slow change, there is still significant resistance to the girls' basketball within Nagpada. Clerics regularly criticise the players in sermons.

In the Zulfiqar restaurant, only a few metres from the training ground, the owner, Abdul Haq, said it was wrong that girls played basketball. "They should be indoors or at school at that age. It's not the right activity for them," he said.

Ali Hassan, a 34-year-old medical technician, said there was nothing wrong with girls playing basketball but they should be "properly dressed". He suggested a full head-to-toe veil. Zulfiqar Haidar, a cobbler, thought that given the demands of the sport, some kind of adapted dress which would allow the girls to see would be preferable – though "definitely no shorts and no exposed hair".

For Noor Khan and the club's other organisers, however, the immediate problem is not social, but financial. The tournament planned for January will only occur if funds can be found. But sponsors are far from forthcoming. Khan blames the migrant labourers who are living in shacks around the court, saying their presence puts off the big brands he hopes might be interested in some kind of involvement with the club.

Saeed Bijapuri, a former national-level player from Nagpada, said it was the reputation of the neighbourhood itself. "No one wants to have their name associated with Mumbai number 8 [the local postcode]," he told the Guardian. "Even if this is the best court around, with the most enthusiastic players and the most knowledgeable crowd. That doesn't seem to matter to the businessmen."

Article for Extracts 15 and 16

New wave of well-off Pakistani women drawn to conservative Islam

Wealthy, educated women are increasingly embracing the trend for religious inquiry and observance

- Jason Burke
- guardian.co.uk, Monday 9 April 2012 19.06 BST

All the women working in the information technology division of the Bank of Punjab's headquarters in the western Pakistani city of Lahore wear headscarves tightly wound around their cheeks and chin, framing their faces as they tap at their keyboards. A year or so ago not one covered their heads with the hijab.

"I was the first," says 28-year-old Shumaila, as she waited with some impatience in the city's iStore for her new £800 Apple MacBook to be loaded with the software she had ordered.

"I started reading the Qur'an properly and praying five times a day. No one made me wear the hijab. That would be impossible," she laughs brightly. "I showed the way to the other girls at work."

They are not alone. Though there are no statistics and most evidence is anecdotal, a new wave of interest in more conservative strands of Islam among wealthier and better educated women in Pakistan appears clear.

It is part of a broader cultural and religious shift seen in the country over decades but which observers say has accelerated in the past 10 years.

"The other girls who were working with us left," Shumaila said. "They found the new environment a bit unfriendly."

One indication of the trend is the growing proportion of women within the conservative religious political organisation Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Syed Munawar Hassan, the leader of JI in Pakistan, said that women made up an increasing proportion of the organisation's 6 million members and 30,000 organisers. "Our women's wing is doing very well," he said. "They are some of our best organisers."

JI, like its counterparts elsewhere in the Islamic world, has traditionally recruited among the lower middle class, swollen in recent decades in Pakistan by rapid urbanisation and economic growth. But the new wave of devotion is now touching the elite in a new way. Al-Huda (The Guidance), an organisation set up in 1994 to spread a new and often rigorous piety among Pakistani women, has gained a foothold among the upper reaches of society.

The group, which critics accuse of encouraging intolerant strands of Islam influenced by those practised in Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, has grown from an initial single small centre in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, to a presence in every city, and is expanding among the Pakistani diaspora abroad.

Members attend intensive courses in Qur'anic studies and Arabic and are directed to do social welfare work, too. Not all enjoy the experience of al-Huda, however.

"I found it very limiting and rigid. But it is very popular among women from very wealthy families that are quite conservative. Recently there are a lot of young women coming to a very traditional Islam. There is a deep desire for learning," said Maha Jehangir, a 30-year-old consultant and former al-Huda member.

Jehangir, who lives in a large house in one of the most exclusive parts of Islamabad, said questions posed by the events of the past decade were particularly important for young women.

"People who grew up within the war on terror are asking, what does it mean to be a Nato ally? Is India our worst enemy? We are bombarded by all this information and there is a deep need for answers. That leads to religious inquiry," Jehangir said.

Many found the answers in conservative strands of religious practice, she said.

Other influences that underpin the new piety among wealthy women include the experience of many Pakistanis who have spent time in the Gulf.

Amna, a 21-year-old business student whose father was a manager for a major firm in Saudi Arabia, said that it was wrong to think that women who were richer or more educated would inevitably be more secular.

"Everything we learn comes from the Qur'an. Maths, computers, banking – the Qur'an contains everything," said Amna, who wears a Saudi-style full veil covering all but her eyes even at the all-female college in Islamabad where she studies.

However, if there is a demand for more rigorous, literalist strands of Islamic practice among wealthy and educated women, there is also an interest in more tolerant varieties.

In Lahore, the al-Mawrid institute is attracting more and more "educated ladies, doctors, professors, housewives who do not know about Islam", says Kaukab Shehzad, a 43-year-old teacher.

The institute, in the wealthy suburb of Model Town, was set up three years ago but had to move after receiving threats from radical scholars, she said. "We read the Qur'an in detail but we discuss other religions too. We were attacked for saying that the niqab [Saudi-style veil] is not justified in the Qur'anic teachings and for arguing against their interpretation of the idea of jihad," she said.

Though solidarity with Muslim communities overseas is encouraged by many conservative practitioners, many of the new devout shun such a global vision and identity. Shumaila, the bank worker and Apple enthusiast, says she is not interested in events in the Middle East: "We've enough going on here."

Jahangir, the former al-Huda member in Islamabad, recently spent two years studying in a religious school of the Deobandi branch of Islam, also followed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. A graduate of both Massachusetts and London Universities, she too said that

political activism was of little interest: "I don't try to make sense of the Taliban. I find [them] obscure and irrelevant. For me, [the Deobandi school of Islam] is far more of a route to spirituality than a political ideology."

Article for Extracts 19 and 26

Living with 9/11: the Muslim American

Linda Sarsour lives in Brooklyn and is from a Palestinian American family. She has become increasingly involved in community activism since the September 11 attacks

- Paul Harris
- guardian.co.uk, Monday 5 September 2011 20.00 BST

Linda Sarsour, 31, remembers the exact moment when it dawned on her that the terrible events of September 11, 2001, would change her world. Sarsour, then a student at a local college in Brooklyn, had grown up in the tight-knit Arab American community of Bay Ridge in the suburbs of New York city. She was from a Palestinian American family and fiercely proud of both sides of her identity.

But as she rushed into her home just a few hours after the attacks she was stunned to see her mother hurrying out of the house with her hair uncovered. Even through the shock of the morning's events, it was still an arresting sight to see her mother not wearing a headscarf in public. "I bumped into her," Sarsour says. "I was: 'Mom! You forgot to wear your hijab.' And she said: 'We can't wear it.' She was going to pick up my brother from middle school. My brother looks like a white kid with dark hair and she didn't want to wear a hijab so that people would not know he was a Muslim. I was speechless."

Ten years later Sarsour, who as a young student was not especially interested in community activism, is director of the Arab American Association of New York (AAANY). She sits, wearing a hijab herself, in a back room of the AAANY office off Bay Ridge's busy main drag. Sarsour is a petite woman with a strong Brooklyn accent. She is calm and composed, even though the interview is constantly interrupted by people seeking help and advice. That is normal. The AAANY is a lifeline to the community of Bay Ridge and beyond. It offers legal advice, help on immigration and summer classes for young kids. Today, the lobby is packed with Muslim women eager to sign up for English language courses. "It's just the normal everyday chaos," Sarsour says.

She joined the organisation in 2002 when she was asked to help the AAANY cope with the fears of a Muslim American community increasingly under suspicion in a country terrified of another attack and about to go to war in Iraq. "I had women that would come and say the FBI had been. Sometimes it was actually NYPD or immigration but our community always called them FBI," Sarsour says. "They would say: 'In the morning they came to my house and they took my husband.' They had no information about where their husband was or where they were taken. I started thinking to myself: 'I have to learn more about this and what is going on.'"

What Sarsour realised was that Muslim Americans – and Arab Americans in particular – were about to become America's latest ethnic scapegoat. Many groups had been there before them. When the Irish first came to America in the 19th century they were feared and discriminated against. Later, mass immigration by Italians and Jews saw them suffer the same indignities. Roman Catholics, including John F Kennedy, were once seen as potentially dangerous elements, subject to the influence of a foreign power. Japanese Americans were

interned in their thousands during the second world war. Now, over the past decade, Sarsour believes, Muslim Americans have suffered from similar prejudice and suspicion.

Since she saw her mother shed her hijab to collect her brother from school she thinks things have only got worse. "It has happened to other communities before ours," she says. "But we are the victims now."

Sarsour lists the problems in the New York region. There was a knife attack on a cab driver last year after his passenger asked him if he was Muslim – and then slashed him when he replied that he was. There are bullying incidents in schools that she hears about from her friends and family. There was the furore over the so-called "Ground Zero mosque" in lower Manhattan. That was followed by other attempts, some successful, to prevent mosques being built in and around the city.

Finally, there was the fuss over Florida preacher Terry Jones and his decision to burn a Qur'an. For Sarsour it seemed Islam itself was questioned by her fellow Americans. "It makes me feel foreign when I am not foreign," she says. She tells a story of being verbally abused in a Bay Ridge bank by a fellow customer who disliked her headscarf.

She speaks of a young Muslim boy at a summer camp who was afraid to admit his faith out of a fear he would be stabbed, just like the taxi driver. "It makes me sad that our kids are growing up in a country where they are American, but in a sense, have to prove it. They can't just be who they are like everyone else. Who they are is something suspicious, something scary, something misunderstood," she says.

But Sarsour believes she can embody her two identities: that of a Muslim of Palestinian descent, and that of an American woman born and bred in Brooklyn. "My American side marries my Palestinian side well. Americans in general, we are very steadfast people, we know what we want, we get what we want. My American side makes me fearless."

Which is perhaps why Sarsour's ambitions lie beyond the AAANY. She has already flung herself into local Democratic politics by organising voter drives in Brooklyn. She believes that through hard work and campaigning she can persuade not only the Muslim Americans of Bay Ridge to vote for her, but also the rest of the community: the Italian Americans, the Irish Americans and the Russians. Anyone, really, regardless of faith. She aims to stand for office one day, wearing her hijab. "I care about affordable housing, I care about bus routes, I care about small business, I care about schools. These are not Muslim issues. Even protection of civil rights – that's not just a Muslim issue. That is for everyone."

Ten years after 9/11, perhaps one of the least expected outcomes of that terrible day will be a headscarf-wearing Arab American woman hitting the streets of Brooklyn and asking her fellow citizens for their votes.

Article for Extract 20

Muslim women: beyond the stereotype

They run workshops combating al-Qaida propaganda and face personal danger promoting moderate Islam. Haroon Siddique meets the Muslim women confronting prejudice in their fight against extremism

- Haroon Siddique
- The Guardian, Friday 29 April 2011

Tehmina Kazi wears modest western dress and believes in plurality and diversity within her faith, Islam. For her pains, she has been labelled a whore, admonished for not wearing the hijab and accused, inaccurately, of wearing short skirts by people she has never met, writing online.

When she defended Usama Hasan, the London imam who faced death threats and was suspended from Leyton mosque last month after he said evolution was compatible with Islam, she had to go to police after receiving threats of her own.

Despite this, Kazi, the director of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, remains defiant in her role as one of the small but growing number of British Muslim women challenging and combating Islamic extremism. Campaigning against any extremism is not for the faint-hearted, but for Muslim women it requires a special kind of resolve. "It takes a lot more courage to do this if you're a woman because the type of criticism you get is very different," she says, highlighting the personal nature of the abuse. "They always talk about what you wear."

Kazi believes women should be free to wear whatever they choose – it is stereotypes about Muslim women that she aims to confront. BMSD, which, despite not being a women's organisation, has always had female leadership after being founded by columnist Yasmin Alibhai Brown – supports a young Muslim leadership programme, counter-demonstrates against extremist groups, such as Anjem Choudary's Islam4UK, and attempts to get moderate voices heard in debates about Islam. The group emphasises the underutilised weapon of humour in taking the fight to the extremists. In one video on the BMSD website, an archetypal "angry young Muslim" begins ominously, "I have a message for those who insult Islam," before adding: "Let's agree to disagree."

It campaigns against both Islamic extremism and Islamophobia – Kazi cites the example of "the preacher going to the mosque and saying women who wear perfume are adulterers", as well as stereotypes of Muslims that suggests all women are marginalised.

These views are echoed by Sara Khan who set up Inspire two years ago because she felt there was no organisation helping Muslim women to achieve their potential. "It's quite patronising. To say Muslim women are oppressed or don't contribute is just so patronising – no community wants to be stereotyped."

Khan makes no attempt to hide her frustration as she rails against the wider perception of Muslim women, which, for her, manifests itself in the media preoccupation with the hijab. Khan wore the hijab for 15 years before she tired of the "obsession" surrounding it. Despite

Khan's frustration at stereotyping, she is not blind to the fact that not all Muslim women have had the same freedom and opportunities as she has, recognising that there are "Muslim women not allowed to go out of the house".

Khan, who sat on the Home Office working group tackling extremism and radicalisation, and Inspire are behind an event at City Hall for 200 activists, academics and policy-makers called Speaking in God's Name: Re-examining Gender in Islam next month, in which religious experts will aim to debunk restrictions conservative Muslims seek to place on women. Khan says it is the first event of its kind. "Let's have a real debate about the role of women," she says. "That debate is not happening. You get the same 'No sister, you're not allowed to travel on your own'."

She blames the lack of Islamic literature for female followers and provisions for women at mosques for what she describes as an increasing terrorist threat from women. Citing the student who stabbed the MP Stephen Timms, she says: "It's not surprising Roshonara Chaudhry learned her faith from the internet." Khan argues that the government's much-criticised preventing violent terrorism scheme, now being revamped, suffered from a lack of female involvement.

She makes a compelling case for women to be central in the battle against extremism. "Women shape values in children," she says. Inspire runs workshops to educate mothers in countering al-Qaida propaganda, arming them with religious texts they can use to rebut the arguments of extremists that their children may hear.

Like Kazi and Khan, Houriya Ahmed, who until last month worked for the Centre for Social Cohesion – a thinktank that issues briefing papers on radicalisation and extremism – has had insults about not wearing the hijab, or as she puts it "not being Muslim enough". But she is less inclined to attribute them to gender, believing anyone who challenges extremists is likely to face abuse.

As she works not for a Muslim organisation but for the CSC, her experiences are different from the other Muslim women interviewed. "I don't want to be seen as a Muslim woman doing this," says Ahmed, who sees her religion as a private matter that is irrelevant to her job.

Other campaigners disagree. Rabia Mirza, who is involved with Cheerleaders Against Everything speaks about how involvement in fighting extremism has strengthened her faith. A disparate group with an anarchic sense of humour, reflected in its title, it has managed to get under the skin of both Islamic extremists and leftwingers. As well as mounting counter-demonstrations against extremists groups, its members go on extremist forums to argue their case.

Cheerleaders has informal links with Kazia's BMSD as well as, controversially, the English Defence League. Ex-EDL members, who remain committed to challenging extremism but quit the far-right group because of a belief it was indiscriminate in its attacks on Islam, have joined with the Cheerleaders to form an organisation called the Nice Ones. Mirza says the idea is to link with those – "very few" – within the EDL whose goal is to combat Islamic extremism, rather than just oppose Islam.

However one views such an association, it is unarguable that this type of alliance would be unthinkable to the Muslim groups usually rolled out as constituting the frontline in the fight

against extremism. Despite breaking the mould, Mirza accepts that women need the co-operation of people who the extremists can identify with more readily. "If we formed a group of women who are highly liberated, it will annoy them, so we need a middle ground," she says.

"We Muslims need to take a bit of an active role," says Mirza. "We need to educate our women, liberate women and that will lead the way. Every country where they have educated their women, the country has thrived."

There is a big gulf in the level of experience of Mirza, who is at university, and someone such as Khan in trying to shake up the way Muslim leaders respond to the issues affecting British Muslims, but they are equally convinced of the need for change. Khan says she is sick of traditional male-led Muslim organisations failing to come up with solutions, and responding to each controversy with the mantra "Islam is a religion of peace". She is working for change and hopes others will join her. "Muslim women are so frustrated with the leadership," she says. "We need the discourse of women – they will bring a whole new dimension to it."

But ultimately it is not just the conservative male Muslim leadership that Muslim women want to change their ways. They want society as a whole to see what Muslim women can do if people will only set the stereotypes aside. "There's a perception that Muslim women are sitting at home, not doing anything," says Khan, "but that's not the case at all."

Article for Extract 21

UK's first course in women, Islam and the media launched

University of East Anglia degree module will cover topics including veil wearing, 'honour' crimes and arranged marriages

- David Shariatmadari
- guardian.co.uk, Thursday 19 January 2012 10.02 GMT

Women, Islam and the media are topics often found in close conjunction, and not always in the happiest of circumstances. So in a canny move, the University of East Anglia (UEA), which often gives better-known institutions a run for their money in terms of column inches, has developed a course entitled exactly that.

The 12-week module, which the university claims is the first of its kind in the UK, will cover the often inflammatory topics of veil wearing, arranged marriage and "honour" crimes – looking at how they are portrayed in contemporary film, TV and other media, and how this reflects cultural biases in both the east and west.

It launches this week and 18 third-year students have enrolled. Roughly equal numbers of men and women have signed up.

The course was developed by Dr Eylem Atakav, a graduate of Ankara University and lecturer at UEA. "Lots of people have written about women and Islam, lots of people have written about Islam and media or women and media, but they haven't been brought together before," she said.

Atakav said the course would be an important way of changing perceptions of Islam. Study materials include films and TV programmes from around the world, including Iran, the US, Turkey and China. "We will look at how the media talk about 'honour'-based violence, for example. If it's a Middle Eastern woman who happens also to be a Muslim woman it's called an 'honour crime'. But if it's a British woman who was killed because her husband was jealous because she was having an affair with another man, it's called murder.

"These crimes happen everywhere in the world, it's not just a Muslim, or just a Middle Eastern thing."

Journalist and broadcaster Nabila Ramdani agrees there is a need to challenge stereotypes. "The media caricatures [Muslim women]. It is the same kind of media treatment which sees Muslim men portrayed as swarthy types with beards or – at worst – potential terrorists," she said.

Atakav said the course had added relevance in the light of the Arab spring and new forms of political activism by women.

This week Germany's first university department of Islamic theology opened in the city of Tübingen. Three further institutions are planned across the country, designed to train future imams and teachers. Germany's education minister, Annette Schavan, hailed the scheme as an

antidote to "hate preachers", according to Deutsche Presse-Agentur. Thirty-six students have enrolled for bachelor degrees.

Article for Extract 22, 25 and 31

Can Jean-François Copé save France from anti-Muslim extremism?

The secretary-general of French president Nicolas Sarkozy's party may have the most difficult job in the country

- Angelique Chrisafis in Paris
- guardian.co.uk, Thursday 24 March 2011 15.00 GMT

Jean-François Copé leans back and contemplates the Zorro-masked crusader figurine on his desk. "My mother bought it for me when I joined the government," he says. "Because Zorro fights injustice and when he's knocked off his horse, he gets straight back on. And now I've got Napoleon next to him," he adds, rearranging a plastic Bonaparte.

Copé, dubbed Sarkozilla for his killer political ambition, is the man with the most difficult task in France.

He holds the key to whether the country can lift itself out of the gloom-ridden, scaremongering, anti-Muslim, nationalistic extremism which intellectuals warn has taken over mainstream debate.

Secretary general of Nicolas Sarkozy's rightwing ruling UMP party, humiliated in local elections this week when the extreme-right Front National virtually equalled its score, he must convince the classic French right to resist the onslaught of Marine Le Pen.

Yet he is unabashed about appropriating far-right topics. He is the man behind the "burqa ban", which means from next month women in niqab, or Muslim full-face coverings, will be banned from all public places.

He is about to lead a controversial national "debate" on Islam to decide the place of Muslims in the secular state.

A friend of David Cameron and William Hague, he has declared he will run for the French presidency in 2017. In the meantime, he must try to stop the UMP collapsing and Sarkozy being eliminated from next year's presidential race.

"He and Sarkozy were rivals for years, their personalities, and egos, are so similar," said one party member in Paris. "But now we're seriously looking to Copé to get us out of this terrible mess."

Copé is an MP with a bulldozer reputation for rebelling against Sarkozy as head of the UMP parliament group. He's as interested as the president in targeting "national identity", integrating immigrants and blasting crime.

His family, Jews originally from eastern Europe, were saved from the Nazi concentration camp roundups by a French family who hid them. As mayor of Meaux outside Paris, he proudly dynamited the town's tower-block ghettos.

He is a rigid product of France's exclusive postgraduate school for civil servants, ENA. But his father, a top surgeon, has retrained as an actor and appeared in France's biggest TV soap opera, the Marseille-based *Plus Belle La Vie* – the equivalent of George Osborne's dad taking a cameo in *Coronation Street*.

Why are record numbers of French people now voting Front National?

"Fear," he says with a sigh. "People are afraid of everything. There has been a banking crisis, a financial crisis, an economic crisis, a social crisis, a geostrategic crisis and an environmental crisis.

"That's considerable in a country that's used to being protected. But the Front National doesn't have any answers."

Copé claims the UMP's best tactic is "solutions" such as the niqab ban. It's about women's rights and the notion of living together, he argues. "If you meet a woman in a burqa, she can't reply to your smile. It's a denial of identity."

The UMP – a broad coalition party of moderate centrists and rightwingers created by Jacques Chirac in 2002 – is tearing itself apart over the debate on Islam ordered by Sarkozy.

Some in the party complain of a lurch to the right and the stigmatisation of France's estimated 5 million Muslims just to gain populist appeal. Copé, who will lead the debate on 5 April, is defiant.

Topics include the building of mosques – a few overcrowded, makeshift prayer-rooms spill on to the street – as well as Sarkozy's drive to ban halal food in secular school canteens and define how French imams should preach.

Sarkozy's former diversity adviser, sacked for denouncing the debate, called Copé an Islamophobe.

Copé dismisses this outright. He argues that fundamentalists are creating a "deformed caricature" of Islam and stoking tension in France.

"There are a certain number of extreme behaviours led by fundamentalists who are using their religion for political ends and use extremist techniques," he says, citing street prayers, the niqab, women refusing to be treated by male doctors and girls banned by their parents from mixed swimming sessions.

"None of these phenomena existed 10 years ago. They have developed today with fundamentalism. The Front National is seizing on them to caricature Muslims and exacerbate tensions.

"All this is happening with a backdrop in France of a social crisis, and an identity crisis for some recent immigrant families who haven't been able to integrate for various reasons: they were put in ghettos, they have education or professional problems, crime or they can't make ends meet."

The 1905 French law separating church and state predated the arrival of most Muslims, he argues, so now "Islam in France" must be defined. "We have to remind of the rules of secularism and come up with concrete measures."

To him, French people crave one thing: "a future". France's main problem is that "people think they have no prospects".

He blames French pessimism on the "weakening of the value of work", and wants to abolish the 35-hour week, which has created "two Frances", one which toils very long hours and another, largely public sector, which does not. Both feel discouraged and unable to make ends meet.

The UMP is riven with infighting over how to direct voters away from Front National candidates in Sunday's local election final round. Sarkozy's poll ratings are historically low.

Copé, with an eye on his own future presidential ambitions, has been touring party meetings promising that hard times bring "the most beautiful battles".

"I've never known a presidential race to be easy," he says, rising from his desk to firefight the next controversy.

Article for Extracts 23 and 24

Muslim women protest on first day of France's face veil ban

Muslims take to the streets of Paris in protest at new French law banning the wearing of niqabs and burqas in public

- Angelique Chrisafis in Paris
- guardian.co.uk, Monday 11 April 2011 21.22 BST

Kenza Drider stood defiantly outside Notre Dame, adjusting her niqab to reveal only a glimpse of her eyes. Scores of police with a riot van and several lorries stood by as she and another woman in a niqab staged a peaceful protest for the right "to dress as they please". On the first day of France's ban on full Islamic face-coverings, this was the first test.

"I'm not here to provoke, but to defend my civil liberties as a French citizen," said Drider, a 32-year-old mother-of-four from Avignon, accompanied by around 10 supporters. Japanese tourists and Spanish schoolchildren fought their way through TV crews to get a picture of the spectacle. Then police swooped.

Drider had not been stopped on her train journey into Paris. But as she spoke to journalists at Notre Dame, she was led off by plainclothes police and driven away along with two protest organisers. Next a woman in a niqab in her 40s from a Paris suburb was grabbed by a plainclothes officer, who gripped her tightly and frog-marched her to another police bus. Officers said the women were not detained for their niqabs but because their protest had not been authorised.

Under the law promoted by Nicolas Sarkozy, any Muslim woman wearing a face veil is now banned from all public places in France, including when walking down the street, taking a train, going to hospital or collecting her children from school. Women in niqabs will be effectively under house arrest, allowed only inside a place of worship or a private car, although they risk being stopped by traffic police if they drive.

But several French police unions yesterday warned that the law was almost impossible to enforce and that they would not make it a priority to stop women in full veils walking down the street.

Halima, a 53-year-old mother from Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, who wears a headscarf, was detained by police for standing silently with the niqab-wearers at Notre Dame. She said: "This is the first time I've ever protested over anything. I'm not in favour of the niqab, I don't wear it myself. But it's wrong for the government to ban women from dressing how they want. Islamophobia is on the rise in France. First it's the niqab, then they'll ban the jilbab, then it will be plain headscarves outlawed."

Rachid Nekkaz, a property developer and rights campaigner from the Paris suburbs, was detained outside the Elysée palace with a woman in a niqab. Nekkaz, who organised the Notre Dame protest, had offered to pay niqab wearers' fines for breaking the law. He said police had not wanted to formally caution the woman for wearing a niqab.

Women in face veils risk a €150 (£132) fine or citizenship lessons. Police cannot forcibly remove face coverings in the street but can order women to a police station to check their identity. The government estimates between 350 and 2,000 women cover their faces in France, out of a total Muslim population between four and six million.

Some niqab-wearers – many of them French converts – vowed to continue going out and to take their cases to the European court of human rights if stopped by police. Others have moved abroad, while just one woman told French papers she had permanently removed her face covering.

Another niqab wearer said women she knew would wear bird-flu-style medical face masks and say they were ill in order to get round the law against covering your face.

Shop-owners said luxury fashion boutiques near the Champs Elysées were unlikely to call the police to detain female tourists in niqabs from the Gulf. This would create a two-tier system between rich tourists and poor French people, one trader complained. Emmanuel Roux from the police union, Syndicat des Commissaires de la Police Nationale, said the law would be "infinitely difficult to apply" and "infinitely little applied".

Sarkozy, whose polls are at record lows with next year's presidential election looming, has been accused of stigmatising Muslims to boost his support among far-right voters. Since he declared in 2009 that the burqa was "not welcome in France", women in all forms of veils and head coverings said verbal abuse against them had increased. Recently the interior minister, Claude Gueant, suggested the growing number of Muslims in France was a problem. Religious groups have likened current Islamophobia in France to anti-Jewish feeling before the second world war.

France has a strict separation of church and state and banned headscarves and all religious symbols in schools in 2004.

Samy Debah, head of the French Collective against Islamophobia, said: "The niqab law is a pretext to reduce the visibility of Muslims in public spaces. It exposes an old French colonial reflex, that 'Arabs and blacks' only understand force and you can't talk to them."

- This article was amended on 12 April 2011 to remove the phrase 'normal headscarf' in the sixth paragraph

Article for Extract 27

Masked gunmen kill three as Islamist militants target £9bn ski resorts plan

Russian forces tighten security after attack on minibus and cable car explosion in troubled North Caucasus

- Tom Parfitt in Nalchik
- guardian.co.uk, Sunday 20 February 2011 19.34 GMT

A wave of killings is sweeping the Russian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria as Islamist insurgents expand their battle across the strife-ridden North Caucasus. Security forces introduced a strict anti-terrorism regime near the ski mountain of Elbrus, after masked gunmen shot dead three Muscovite tourists and injured two others travelling by minibus towards the resort area on Friday.

It comes a fortnight after Doku Umarov, the insurgents' Chechen leader who ordered the Domodedovo airport bombing that killed 36 people in January, promised Russia a "year of blood and tears". The murder of the tourists was almost certainly organised with the aim of discrediting Kremlin plans to develop a £9bn chain of ski resorts across the North Caucasus, announced by President Dmitry Medvedev at the Davos World Economic Forum last month.

Television pictures showed the tourists' bullet-riddled vehicle as security operatives introduced a curfew and identity checks near Elbrus – the main resort in Medvedev's plan.

An explosion at one of the resort's cable cars, also on Friday, brought several cabins crashing to the ground. No-one was hurt in that incident but three more bombs were defused at the resort on Saturday.

The attacks were most likely orchestrated by Islamist militants who have carried out a spate of murders in the republic in the last three months. Kabardino-Balkaria's mufti, Anas Pshikhachev and Aslan Tsipinov, a prominent ethnographer who the militants accused of promoting paganism, were assassinated in December.

The head of administration of a town near the capital, Nalchik, was shot dead last month and five policemen were machine-gunned in a cafe three weeks ago. Several other officers and state officials have died in separate incidents.

Violence in the North Caucasus is rooted in two largely secular wars for independence between Chechen separatists and the Russian army in the 1990s. It has since mutated into a region-wide Islamist insurgency whose leaders are bent on establishing a caliphate under sharia law.

In the last two years the militants have organised a series of large-scale terror attacks, culminating in the attack by two "black widow" suicide bombers that killed 40 people in the Moscow metro last year, and the Domodedovo blast. Targeted murders of specific civilians are also on the increase. "The fighters of the Islamic underground have reached a level of radicalism and intolerance which wasn't apparent five years ago," said Valery Khatazhukov, a human rights activist in Nalchik.

A series of traditional healers have been killed in the North Caucasus. Kabardino-Balkaria was especially shocked by the murder of Tsipinov, 51, a respected anthropologist and beekeeper who organised festivals to celebrate the traditions of Kabardin people, the largest national group in the republic.

The militants claimed responsibility on their website after two men gunned Tsipinov down at his gate in the village of Shalushka, near Nalchik. They condemned him as a "mushrik" (idolator) who revived pagan customs.

"It was a totally senseless death," his wife, Khalimat, told the Guardian, sitting in a basement room full of her husband's collection of Kabardin artefacts, including copper ewers and a horse-hair lasso. "He was a scholar, a father and a Muslim believer who loved his people and their history and had nothing to do with politics or conflict."

The tourists were killed on Friday after a group of men in a black car with no number plates stopped them on a road leading toward Elbrus in Baksan district. The men demanded documents and then opened fire, killing two men and one woman, and injuring two other passengers.

In Nalchik, a smart town of tree-lined boulevards, there is a palpable sense of fear.

Albert, a taxi driver who declined to give his surname, said: "Every other day someone is exterminated. The beardies [extremists] leave leaflets around town threatening, 'don't go to this doctor, don't get your hair cut by a woman.'"

He added: "There was a fortune teller in our district, a Greek. He made predictions by looking at coffee dregs. Innocent guy. They killed him, just like that."

Militants in the republic have said they were driven to violence after police and security forces repeatedly detained and beat conservative Muslims and closed their mosques, especially in the run-up to the 2005 Nalchik raid. The violence near Elbrus will raise fears that bloodshed is creeping toward the Black Sea coast, where Russia will hold the Winter Olympics in three years' time.

Article for Extract 28

Gaddafi son declares allegiance to Islamists

Saif al-Islam suggests Libya could become Islamic state – months after branding Islamists as conspirators in rebellion

- Martin Chulov and Chris Stephen in Misrata
- guardian.co.uk, Thursday 4 August 2011 19.42 BST

The one-time alternative face of Colonel Gaddafi's regime, his son, Saif al-Islam, has declared allegiance to Islamists whom he had previously branded as lead-conspirators in the five-month rebellion that has crippled Libya. The move is a departure from five months of rhetoric by Gaddafi junior and his father, both of whom had repeatedly cast the five-month uprising as a putsch by Islamists with a jihad agenda.

Now, Saif Gaddafi has suggested he is prepared to help Islamic groups oust any secular movements in Libya and even suggested Libya could emerge from civil war as an Islamic state.

"You want us to make a compromise. OK," he said in an interview with the New York Times. "You want us to share the pot. OK, but with who? The Islamists are the real force on the ground."

Gaddafi, who has only twice agreed to be interviewed since the rebel uprising in Libya in February, had transformed his appearance. He wore a beard which was characteristic of the fundamentalist salafist, or wahabi interpretation of Islam during the interview, and reportedly carried Islamic prayer beads.

Before the uprising he was often seen in the elite clubs and hotels of Europe, where he had cultivated a reputation as a cultivated, western-orientated heir apparent to the four decades of often oppressive rule of his father.

Now, according to the man he described as the "spiritual leader" of the Islamists in eastern Libya, "secular people ... have no place here in Libya". Citing an Islamist figure, Ali Sallabi, Gaddafi said: "These are our common enemies, those nice people with jackets and ties, flying in on private jets from Paris and London."

The apparent about-turn could be an attempt to play to common concerns among Arab states that fundamental Islamists may use the vacuum created by the fall of decades-old dictatorships to push for the introduction of Islamic law and societies that disavow any notion of plural democracies.

The Muslim Brotherhood movements in Egypt and Jordan both espouse a literal interpretation of Qur'anic teachings and were perceived as subversive threats in Hosni Mubarak's Egypt and also in Syria, where the troubled regime of Bashar al-Assad is attempting to portray the uprising there as an Islamic conspiracy supported by the US and Israel.

North Africa has been a front for several Islamic insurrections in recent years and Libya's rebellion does have a strong Islamist element, which has formed an alliance with more liberal members of the Benghazi establishment, as well as elements of Colonel Gaddafi's army which defected in large numbers in February.

The secular side of the rebels has so far been satisfied that the Islamists share a common goal of ousting Colonel Gaddafi and would not stand in the way of plans to democratise Libya if the regime falls. But in Tripoli regime propaganda has cast the country's Islamists as al-Qaida operatives. Posters in Green Square, which remains a government stronghold, show bearded men whom they brand as al-Qaida fighters in cahoots with the US.

Gaddafi said: "We don't trust them [Islamists]. But we have to deal with them."

In Misrata many said Saif-Al-Islam's comments were an admission that Tripoli supports terrorism. "We have said it before, we say it to the whole world, Gaddafi is behind every terrorist group," said Khalid Alwafi, a criminal lawyer and war crimes investigator. "Now he has admitted it himself, through his son."

Other rebels say they are incredulous, pointing out that for months the Gaddafi regime has publicly blamed the rebellion on al-Qaida and Islamic fundamentalists, but now appears to have reversed course by embracing them.

Article for Extract 32

Maher Zain: 'My music is a message of Islam'

Maher Zain's rise to prominence is emblematic of the Arab revolutions, in which young Muslims who don't want to choose between Islam and modernity have played a leading role

- Omar Shahid
- guardian.co.uk, Thursday 15 December 2011 22.04 GMT

In 2007, the Lebanese-born Swedish musician Maher Zain was in the US, preparing for the next stage of his career. He was working with chart-topping artists and recording with the Grammy-winning music producer RedOne, himself a Swede of Moroccan heritage. Success was almost within his grasp. Even so, he could feel something was wrong.

"I felt that the music business was very empty," Zain says from a hotel room in Cairo, over Skype. "In the west, all the songs are about love and getting hurt, but there's more to life than that." After making some new Muslim friends in Sweden and finding solace in going to the mosque, he began to practise Islam seriously. But music was something he had loved from a young age and he didn't want to abandon it. Instead, he made a transition: he swapped secular music for something more religious.

In the process, he ended up finding celebrity status anyway. His debut album, *Thank You Allah*, released in late 2009, became a worldwide sensation: the record took top position on Amazon.com's world music chart, and was the best-selling album of the decade in Malaysia. In Indonesia, it even knocked Justin Bieber off the leading spot.

Zain has been criticised by some Muslims for using musical instruments – a contentious issue in Islamic jurisprudence, with many scholars insisting the voice should take minimal accompaniment. However, Zain's use of music represents the nuances of his faith, and there are other scholars who argue that activities should be considered permissible unless explicitly forbidden in the Qur'an, which music is not.

"I grew up with music and thus using musical instruments was just natural," Zain says. "I did fear a reaction [to using music]. I spoke to some people and they clarified that it's just a matter of difference of opinion amongst Muslim scholars and that as long as the content is positive and clean, then it will be fine. My music is a message of Islam. But I want people to understand what Islam is about. It's a message of peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love."

The fusion of east and west permeates Zain's music. In his videos, including *Insha'Allah* and *The Chosen One* – which have almost 25m YouTube views between them – we see him wearing western attire but reflecting on Islamic topics. The supposed contrast between the two ways of life is challenged in the videos. "I've learned that Islam doesn't contradict with anyone or anytime. It's for everywhere and all times," he says.

His rise to prominence is emblematic of the Arab revolutions, in which young Muslims who don't want to choose between Islam and modernity have played a leading role. Zain's latest single, *Freedom*, was inspired by the uprisings: "Freedom comes from what happened in Tunis and then in Egypt. We hope it carries on in a peaceful way for freedom to prevail." He

is now working on his second album. With Islamophobia such a problem in America and Europe, could Zain's music make an impact in changing people's perceptions of Islam? "I've seen that people want to hear good music but with a positive message. I think it can reach out to new people, given the topics and the quality we are hoping to produce."

Does he think more Muslim artists such as him will emerge? "I hope I will inspire others with my style of music for people to do the same thing. It's all very expensive to make something at this level. This is one of the challenges in the Islamic music industry: not many people want to support this. I'm just a regular guy, but I hope my music can inspire others, insh'allah," he says with smile.

Omar Shahid is the political editor of Live magazine.

Article for Extracts 33, 34 and 35

Prejudices about Islam will be shaken by this show

The hajj, subject of a new exhibition at the British Museum, shows that a respect for other faiths is central to Muslim tradition

Karen Armstrong

guardian.co.uk, Sunday 22 January 2012 22.45 GMT

Ever since the Crusades, when Christians from western Europe were fighting holy wars against Muslims in the near east, western people have often perceived Islam as a violent and intolerant faith – even though when this prejudice took root Islam had a better record of tolerance than Christianity. Recent terrorist atrocities have seemed to confirm this received idea. But if we want a peaceful world, we urgently need a more balanced view. We cannot hope to win the "battle for hearts and minds" unless we know what is actually in them. Nor can we expect Muslims to be impressed by our liberal values if they see us succumbing unquestioningly to a medieval prejudice born in a time of extreme Christian belligerence.

Like Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Sikhs and secularists, some Muslims have undoubtedly been violent and intolerant, but the new exhibition at the British Museum – Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam – is a timely reminder that this is not the whole story. The hajj is one of the five essential practices of Islam; when they make the pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims ritually act out the central principles of their faith. Equating religion with "belief" is a modern western aberration. Like swimming or driving, religious knowledge is practically acquired. You learn only by doing. The ancient rituals of the hajj, which Arabs performed for centuries before Islam, have helped pilgrims to form habits of heart and mind that – *pace* the western stereotype – are non-violent and inclusive.

In the holy city of Mecca, violence of any kind was forbidden. From the moment they left home, pilgrims were not permitted to carry weapons, to swat an insect or speak an angry word, a discipline that introduced them to a new way of living. At a climactic moment of his prophetic career, Muhammad drew on this tradition. Fleeing persecution in Mecca in 622, he and the Muslim community (the umma) had migrated to Medina, 250 miles to the north. Mecca was determined to destroy the umma and a bitter conflict ensued. But eventually Muhammad broke the deadly cycle of warfare with an audacious non-violent initiative.

In March 628, to general astonishment, he announced that he was going to make the hajj. This meant that he had to ride unarmed into enemy territory, yet 1,000 Muslims accompanied him. The pilgrim party narrowly escaped being massacred by the Meccan cavalry, and eventually entered the sacred territory of Mecca where they simply sat down beside their camels and refused to move. Knowing that they would lose all credibility if they slaughtered pilgrims on this holy ground, the Meccans negotiated a truce and Muhammad accepted humiliating conditions that filled the Muslims with dismay. But the Qur'an proclaimed that this apparent defeat was a "clear triumph" because, like Jews and Christians, the Muslims had acted in a spirit of peace, self-restraint and forbearance. Two years later, hostilities ceased and the Meccans voluntarily opened their gates to the prophet.

Clearly the Qur'an did not despise Jews and Christians; this affinity with "the people of the book" was also central to the Muslim cult of Mecca. The Arabs firmly believed that they, too, were children of Abraham, because they were the descendants of his eldest son Ishmael – a regional view shared by the Bible. It was said that Abraham and Ishmael had rebuilt the Ka'bah, the sacred shrine of Mecca, when it had fallen into disrepair, had dedicated it to their God, and then performed the rites of the hajj. Many Arabs thought that Allah, their high God, was the God worshipped by the people of the book, and Christian Arabs used to make the hajj pilgrimage to the Ka'bah alongside the pagans.

The Arabs had no conception of an exclusive religious tradition, so they were deeply shocked when they discovered that most Jews and Christians refused to consider them as part of the Abrahamic family. The Qur'an still urged Muslims to respect the people of the book and revere their prophets, but decreed that instead of facing Jerusalem when they prayed, as hitherto, they should turn towards the Ka'bah built by Abraham.

Like Abraham, who had not belonged to a closed-off cult, they would take no pride in an established institution and, as Abraham had done, focus on the worship of God alone. Hence the Muslim hajj is all about the Abrahamic family – not Muhammad himself. Pilgrims re-enact the story of Hagar and Ishmael, symbolically returning to the era that preceded religious chauvinism.

Alas, all traditions lose their primal purity and we all fail our founders. But the British Museum's beautiful presentation of the hajj can help us understand how the vast majority of the world's Muslims understand their faith. Socrates, founder of the western rational tradition, insisted that the exercise of reason required us constantly and stringently to question received ideas and entrenched certainties. The new exhibition can indeed become a journey to the heart of Islam and also, perhaps, to a more authentic and respectful western rational identity.

- Members of Guardian Extra are invited to an evening viewing of the exhibition followed by a two-course meal plus a curator's talk and Q&A session in the Great Court restaurant. The event takes place on 3 February at 5.30pm. For more information, go to guardian.co.uk/extra