

***British Islam:
Media Representations and Social Meanings***

**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester**

by

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Abstract

Title:

British Islam: Media Representations and Social Meanings.

By:

Elizabeth Poole

This thesis examines meanings circulating about British Muslims in both sections of the British press and its audience. It addresses theoretical questions that have been raised which suggest that in the current political epoch, with its New World Order, Islam has been constructed as the necessary enemy of 'the West'. Consequently, Islam has been demonised in the Western media. This study attempts to verify these arguments and address criticisms of them, specifically the homogenisation of Islam, the West and its media, by concentrating on a specific genre within a specific context: the British national press.

The first part of the study entails a quantitative analysis of 800 texts from two British broadsheets, *The Times* and *The Guardian*, providing their 'news frameworks' with regards to British Islam. This provides the context for the second part of the research, a qualitative discourse analysis of 159 texts, including two tabloid papers, *The Mail* and *The Sun*. Having established the 'preferred' meanings of Islam in a range of papers, reception analysis was included to establish the range of audience meanings, recognising that meanings are not fixed in texts. Particular attention was paid to the variable of cultural proximity, based on the hypothesis that contact with Muslims would work to counter media constructions. Three types of groups were used, Muslims, and non-Muslims with regular, and no contact with Muslims.

The findings of this study shows that there is a consistent and limited 'news framework' with some differences between papers in terms of news values, style, presentation and in particular, political orientations. The non-Muslim audience shares their discursive construction of 'Islam within' as a cultural, ideological threat. Contact with Muslims appears to make little difference in understandings of Islam, as race is the dominant signifier. This thesis provides a detailed analysis of the meanings of British Islam circulating within a specific context, in all their forms and variations.

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Introduction.

This thesis examines the representation of British Muslims in sectors of the mainstream British press. In this introduction, I will provide an insight into the theoretical framework driving the research, an account of the structure of the research and its aims, and the organisation of this thesis.

The theoretical rationale for this project is based on a particular historical, political and social context which, it is argued, has led to a particular image of Islam in the Western media. As a result of contemporary political and social processes, Islam is increasingly a globally salient issue. Current theory postulates that a shift in the global power equation, due to the collapse of communism, has led to anxieties and attempts by 'the West'¹ to maintain its hegemony.² Political Islam, which has emerged out of different experiences of colonialism and oppression, its initial signifier being the Iranian Revolution, 1979, has allowed 'the West' to construct Islam as the new enemy (a global force which represents an ideological and physical threat) based on a historically polarised relationship. This has been necessary for 'the West' to both reassert its power over an economically rich area and in doing so defend its supreme Western identity. Consequently, the media, as an instrument of public ideology, demonises Islam, portraying it as a threat to Western interests, thus reproducing, producing and sustaining the ideology necessary to subjugate Muslims both internationally and domestically.³ The portrayal of extremist images within a framework which advances an historical 'myth of confrontation', Halliday (1996) suggests, absolves 'the West' of any need to justify their hostility.

Crucial to these arguments is the concept of Orientalism (Said, 1978). Orientalism, according to Said, is the historical construction of eastern cultures as alien, the Other, by the West. The ideological assumptions held and perpetuated by Western writers which sees 'them' and 'us' constructed as naturalised, binary oppositions has allowed 'the West' to

¹ I consider this to be a massive construct but it is used in this way in the literature reviewed in Chapter 1. The definition used here is based on its historical construction, dating from the 16th century, as an ideology representing those sets of societies seen to be sharing similar characteristics economically, socially, politically and culturally and thus deemed to be 'modern' (Hall, 1992b).

² The 'theories', briefly related here, of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars will be developed further in Chapter 1.

³ 'Ideology' is defined in this thesis as: 'the mental frameworks- the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought and systems of representation which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define and figure out and render intelligible the way society works' (Hall, 1986: 29).

dominate Oriental cultures. The discourse, therefore, has a function. Writing before current manifestations of political Islam, Said's theory has been resurrected and applied to the current situation. The Orientalist discourse has been strengthened in order to manage these new phenomena. Hence, theory has it, an ethnocentric vision dominates current representations of Islam which are reductive and predominantly negative. Only a few stereotypes⁴ are offered. Muslims are homogenised as backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalists, misogynists, threatening, manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain yet their governments or movements are politically unstable.

Whilst there certainly appears to be evidence for these patterns of representation, I take issue with the homogenisation of 'the West' and its media. Different countries have different political circumstances and motivations which are reproduced and reconstructed in their social systems, including that of the media. Yet, neither are media systems homogenous. The 'media' incorporates a range of communication modes and within these, there are numerous genres, different affiliations, priorities and constraints. The image of 'Islam' will differ according to these and cannot be a unified global image as it is imagined. In addition to this, few writers on Islam's media image have attempted to examine the issue by systematic empirical rather than rhetorical means, providing mainly selective, anecdotal evidence for their claims, for example, Ahmed, 1992, Chap. 6, p. 222. Although often reflecting legitimate anxieties within Muslim communities, they do not incorporate a range of responses to media representations by these communities. This research, therefore, seeks to move beyond other writing on this subject by taking a slice of the media and a specific genre, newspapers (and not assuming that these are homogenous), and contextualising content by examining the British situation, thereby taking account of the conditions of production.

Islam in Britain

Processes of globalisation and migration have resulted in a considerable Muslim presence in the UK. Here, I detail the nature of that presence and the reverberations for the receiving society which have contributed to the current constructions of Muslims in Britain.

Statistics available on the number of Muslims in Britain are generally estimates of around 1 to 1.5 million (Anwar, 1993, 1996; Peach, 1990a, 1994; Peach and Glebe, 1995).

⁴ 'Stereotypes' as meaning 'reduced to a few essentials, fixed in nature by a few, simplified characteristics' (Hall, 1997b: 249).

According to sources, Muslims have been present in the UK for at least 300 years, the first settlers being Arab traders from the Lebanon and seamen from the Yemen and Somali who settled in ports in the UK (Halliday, 1992; Silverman and Yuval-Davis, 1998). Following the second world war, many of the South Asian Muslims who served in the merchant navy stayed in Britain. The biggest influx, however, came in the 1950s through economic migration, mainly South Asian men for whom early settlers were a point of contact. These Muslims came mainly from rural areas, the Mirpur district or North West Frontier of Pakistan and from the Sylhet area of eastern Bangladesh. They settled mainly in the industrial North, working in the steel and textile industries (although approximately 60% are now estimated to reside in London). In 1951, the approximate number of Muslims in the UK was 23,000 which rose to 369,000 by 1971 as families began to join the male workers. Migrant workers also came from the mainly Gujarat district of India and were joined in the 1970s by people from the Middle East and East and North Africa. More recently, Somali, Bosnian, and Kosovan peoples have been displaced. There are also about 5000 converts to Islam in Britain, about half of whom have African-Caribbean origins (Anwar, 1993; Lewis, 1994; Nielsen, 1991b; Peach, 1990a; The Runnymede Trust, 1997b). The Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1971 first slowed down and then virtually stopped immigration bar dependants hence an increasing number of Muslims are now British born. The Muslim community has a larger proportion of young people and less old people than other communities, 60% are under 25 compared to 32% white. Predictions estimate that there will be about 2 million Muslims in the UK by 2020 (Anwar, 1996; The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).

Current statistics regarding Muslims in Britain show that they are severely disadvantaged in relation to other minorities. Many statistics have been compiled through the last census (1991) which, having no question on religious affiliation, have been calculated through the conflation of ethnic groups and countries of origin. This usually includes mainly Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (approximately 95% of whom are Muslim, Anwar, 1996; Peach, 1990b) along with a percentage of people with Middle Eastern, North African and Indian origins.⁵ Other statistics, such as those provided by the Prison Chaplaincy Service, which show an increase in Muslim prisoners in England and Wales of

⁵ Obscuring 'white' Muslims. The methods of compiling statistics on the Muslim population varies with each research project and results in the concealing of some groups (Knott and Noon, 1982). However, the inclusion of a question on religious affiliation in the next census will rectify some of these inadequacies.

40% between 1991-1995, may be distorted by changes in self-definition (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).

Those statistics available show the extent of Muslim disadvantage. There is evidence for an increase in racially motivated crime towards South Asians.⁶ This increased in Britain at the time of the Gulf war. Given the probability that the perpetrators of racial violence are not aware of the religious affiliation of their victims, the reproduction of an anti-Muslim discourse subjects all South Asians to becoming the potential victims of anti-Muslim hostility (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).⁷ A recent OFSTED survey showed that in education, both Bangladeshi and Pakistani children are underachieving. Although having improved on previous years, they continue to lag well behind their Indian counterparts. In 1998, an average of 31% achieved grade A-C in their GCSE's compared to 47% of white pupils. Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups combined accounted for only 2.8% of entrants into higher education in 1998, compared to 89.8% of whites (*The Times*, 'How ethnic groups fare', 11/3/99, p. 6). Muslims also experience 'employment disadvantage' (Modood, Berthoud et al, 1997: 143). For Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, this averages at 39% out of work compared to 13% of white men and these differentials are greater for women. Those in work tend to occupy low income, low status positions but are under represented (if at all) at every level of employment. Discrimination at work was also mostly directed at South Asians who believe that hostilities are aimed, for the greatest part, at the Muslim workers. They continue to be discriminated against in the allocation of facilities such as housing. Their overall standards of living and health are therefore lower than other groups (Modood, Berthoud et al, 1997). These statistics provide evidence for the severe social exclusion of Muslims in Britain in comparison to other minority groups. This type of exclusion from society often leads to feelings of alienation and disempowerment which can exacerbate racial hostility and boundary-making. The media contributes to the material practices of discrimination through its discursive practices which normalise attitudes towards groups, who are problematised, and then legitimises and prefers negative constraining actions above other fairer solutions.

⁶ Nine of the 13 victims of racist violence identified by The Runnymede Trust (1997b) in 1992-3 had Muslim names.

⁷ Given that the highest proportion of Muslims in Great Britain are South Asian (65-75%, Runnymede Trust, 1997b) it is likely that this is the most common representation of British Muslims in the British press.

The Oriental constructions of the Other in Britain have come to be known as 'Islamophobia'.⁸ A recent report by the Runnymede Trust gathered data on experiences and examples of 'Islamophobia' in the UK.⁹ It argued that several events, beginning in the early 1980s, such as The Rushdie Affair, The Honeyford Affair, issues such as *Halal* meat in schools and the Gulf War have pushed Islam onto the national arena. These events have raised questions amongst the host society of the ability of Muslims to assimilate peacefully. Attempts, by Muslims, to preserve their culture have been interpreted as separatism, a threat to the values of the host nation.¹⁰ These responses have increased the desire for cultural autonomy by Muslims and resulted in their politicisation. According to Silverman and Yuval-Davis (1998: 8), these processes have strengthened 'cultural racism' whereby religion and culture (rather than colour or origins) 'constitute the most significant signifiers of racialisation' (quoting Asad, 1990).¹¹ Muslims have therefore entered the frame as the central racialised Other in Britain. In their own research, they found that anti-Muslim racism was more prevalent in 1998 than in 1984.

The processes of fragmentation and globalisation which led to the Muslim presence in the UK have and are continuing to strengthen minority identities and affiliations. This in turn has resulted in a crisis of national identity and a defensive construction of a common national culture to provide stability and certainty which excludes Muslims from Britishness. The increasing visibility of Muslims to non-Muslims in the UK in a global mediated world, within which Muslims are homogenised, has resulted in their construction as a threat to non-Muslims. This (mainly) ideological threat (in the UK) allows Muslims to be suppressed, the practical consequences of which have been described above.

The majority of Muslims in Britain are South Asian. It is therefore essential that this theoretical framework should include the representation of ethnic minorities.¹² Other ethnic

⁸ Defined as 'an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination' (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b: 1).

⁹ Although, they did not coin the term, arguing that it already had a presence in the British Muslim community due to experiences of discrimination. It was first used, however, in the USA in relation to Russia and its activities in Afghanistan, *Insight*, 4 February 1991, p. 37 (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b: 1).

¹⁰ Again, it is not my intention to homogenise British society. This interpretation of events is that which has been found through analysis (of press articles and the literature).

¹¹ Silverman and Yuval-Davis (1998: 13) use the concept of 'racialisation' as 'a definition of the essentialist construction of groups produced through a discourse of cultural absolutism/relativism'. They argue that cultural racism is not a new phenomenon and has always been central to understanding the Other but has become more significant in the contemporary epoch as biological constructions are no longer viable.

¹² The use of ethnic rather than racial groups incorporates cultural, language and religious distinctions (as opposed to biological). However, it is recognised that these distinctions are social and historical constructions rather than natural (Bobo, 1997).

minorities have equally been subject to displacement to the UK. The establishment of other diasporic communities here has also contributed to the crisis in national identity. The press construction of Muslims should therefore be considered in light of these wider processes and context. Extensive empirical work has been implemented on the representation of minorities in the UK (detailed in Chapter 1, p. 32). Findings have shown them to be marginalised, problematised and represented within a negative conflictual framework dominated by crime, violence and immigration. Increasingly, minorities are subject to 'modern racism' which, it is argued, has replaced unacceptable traditional racial sentiments in the media as broadcasters attempt to attract black audiences. Entman (1990: 332) describes this as an 'antiblack affect combined with resentment at the continuing claims of blacks on white resources and sympathies'.

Conceptual Approach

I use the term 'representation' to mean the social process of combining signs to produce meanings.¹³ Whilst it is evident that the media does reproduce the dominant ideologies of the society of which they are a part, I would argue that they also construct their own 'meanings' (norms and values) through signifying practices. Representation is not then a transparent process of re-presenting an objective reality. There is always a mediating effect whereby an event is filtered through interpretive frameworks and becomes saturated with ideological significance. News, then, provides its audiences with interpretive frameworks, ways of seeing the world and defining reality. For this reason, I do not intend to question the viability of 'representations' of Islam or provide examples of an alternative, more probable 'reality', but rather to extract the discursive constructions within the texts which are related to wider social processes. These processes of ideological construction are imbued with power relations since those who own the structures have the power to represent the represented. Central to the theoretical framework then are theories of news production. It is argued that news itself tends to be a limited, conservative and consensual product due to the processes involved in its production. Journalistic practices of news gathering and selection are situated activities, subject to organisational constraints, organisations which together constitute an institution embedded within a commercial market in a capitalist system. This has implications for the product we consume in that to continually attract large audiences requires maintaining the status quo. However, although it

¹³ Meaning is understood as 'the process of making sense of the world around us' (Dahlgren, 1988: 287).

is argued that these conditions will inevitably lead to reduction, it is the consistency of the direction this issue takes which is in question here. These theoretical approaches which frame this thesis are examined further in Chapter 1.

Methods and Structure

It is the aim of this research project to provide empirical evidence to substantiate claims relating to the image of Islam in the media, and to establish the system of representation on Islam, but more specifically to provide a situated regime of representation within a given medium in a given context. However, it is not the intention to make fixed judgements about portrayals without audience reception. The intention, after exploring what is expected to be a limited framework in relation to Islam, is to show how this places limits on understandings of it.

To meet these objectives, I have utilised three methodologies (detailed in Chapter 2). This includes a quantitative analysis of three years, 1994-1996, of daily coverage in two broadsheet newspapers. The most prominent stories, identified by the quantitative analysis, are then examined qualitatively using discourse analysis. The sample includes a year of coverage, 1997, in four papers, two broadsheets and two tabloids. In addition, this is followed by a qualitative reception analysis to ascertain audience interpretations of the coverage. In this way, I am incorporating two 'moments' of the communication process, essential in examining 'meanings'. The multiple methods complement each other, dealing with the inadequacies and problems that occur when only one method is employed.

The quantitative analysis, Chapter 3, aims to reveal the frameworks of representation of British Islam based on the hypothesis (driven by theory) that these will be reductive, relatively stable and unfavourable. In developing these, I am probing into what is 'newsworthy' in relation to British Islam. It should also allow an assessment of whether the controversy surrounding Islam's representation is justified within a solely British context. I am expecting that, due to the need for political stability and the integration of minority groups, these frameworks will be more diverse than their global counterparts. Cultural proximity creates an obstacle to representations which are based solely on fundamentalism. This chapter will also examine global coverage in order to locate British coverage within a comparative framework. By selecting a period of three years, it is thought that the results will be representative of contemporary coverage *in the papers chosen* which have been

selected for their differing political stances. Overall, this chapter provides the context for the qualitative analysis which explores coverage in greater depth.

The qualitative analysis, Chapter 4, seeks to elaborate on the quantitative findings by examining the prevailing press discourses on British Islam. A method of discourse analysis is used to examine the social construction of Muslims on the basis that all texts are discursive constructions. The inclusion of a lower and middle tabloid incorporates a wider range of positions for analysis. On the basis of theory, one would expect to find a unified media framework and consensual assumptions regarding Islam. However, given that texts are part of social processes, they are expected to be sites of contradictions and tensions, expressing the diversity of the social world (a diversity which has greater expression given the focus is British Islam.) A qualitative discourse analysis therefore, allows for an examination of competing discourses.

This thesis also deals with the problems in trying to fix meaning within texts (Chapter 5). It supports the view that whilst a preferred meaning¹⁴ may be established through an analysis of the assumptions lying behind a text which has been authored within a particular social structure, this does not assume that these 'meanings' will be read 'transparently' by the audience and received in uniform ways. Texts may attempt to secure meaning, privileging certain constructions over others. The purpose of the qualitative content analysis is to ascertain what these interpretive frameworks are but audience research is a vital part in examining the construction of meaning. The aims of Chapter 5 are to establish what constitutes the social meanings of Islam within differentially situated social groups and how far they share the discourse of the press. Whilst one of the objectives will be to explore the factors which result in differential decodings, the main variable is that of cultural proximity. The basis for the organisation of the groups is therefore familiarity with Muslims. Muslims are also included based on the hypothesis that the greater cultural distance between sets of peoples, the greater the reliance on media information for interpreting Islam. It is anticipated then, that for the majority of non-Muslims, it is through the media that Muslims are known.

This research analyses British Islam's construction in British newspaper texts and readings of these by differentially situated audience groups. The thesis is structured so an

¹⁴ Defined as 'a weighting of significations in a text towards an ideologically-aligned understanding of it' (Corner, 1991: 272).

examination of theory explaining the current construction of Muslims and a detailed account of the methodologies used are followed by three long chapters, each which correspond with one of these research methods. In these chapters, after working through the data, I summarise the findings and return to the theory. From this study it is hoped that current and dominant meanings circulating in British society regarding one of that society's minority communities will be established.

Chapter 1:

Theoretical Framework.

‘So saturated with meanings, so overdetermined by history, religion and politics are labels like ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’ as sub-divisions of ‘The Orient’ that no-one today can use them without some attention to the formidable polemical mediations that screen the objects, if they exist at all, that the labels designate.’ (Said, 1985: 4).

This chapter provides the conceptual frames for the study of the representation of Islam in the British news media. Little has been written on representations in a specifically British context and much of the literature concentrates on examining the explanations for the negativisation of Islam. It is the intention here to: identify the main reasons given for the increasingly negative representations of Islam globally and, as a result of these, locally, with some attention to the news production processes that impinge on these; and examine what the literature says about those images of Islam that are available, locating them within the general context of race reporting and religious representation. An assessment of the global picture is considered necessary to make sense of the results of the British findings reported here.

Representing the Other: Orientalism

Edward Said’s landmark text on *Orientalism* (1978) provoked a mass of academic interest in and marked the beginning of a period which has seen a wealth of writing on the subject of the image of Islam in ‘the West’. It is therefore considered an important starting point for examining arguments relating to this subject.

Orientalism is defined by Said as an academic label that includes all teaching about the Orient, a ‘style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and, most of the time, the Occident’ whereby Western culture and societies are essentially and inherently superior to Eastern ones (p. 2), and as a ‘corporate institution for dealing with the Orient’ (p. 3). Said used Foucault’s notion of *discourse* to define Orientalism as a discourse for which the key aspects are historical specificity, knowledge and power. It is thus a systematic and instrumental discipline which has allowed European culture to ‘manage and produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively’ (p. 2). It has produced a hegemony, originally

created and maintained by scholarly discovery, whereby cultural generalisations generated a moral position on the origins of modern culture which were naturalised to the point of scientific knowledge.¹

In *Orientalism*, Said analyses mainly academic texts from post Enlightenment Britain and France to modern day Anglo-American social science which claim to know something about the Orient and its people.² The specific Western ethnocentric discourse surrounding the Orient which developed within unequal relations of power was, for the West, political, an instrument of policy, providing the conditions for imperialism to take place.³ In turn, colonial expansion reinforced and secured the discourse, reasserting the supremacy of the West. Oriental society thus became the object of a colonial discourse of knowledge and power. Occidental-Oriental differentiation accounts for the positive features of the West and the negative of the East.

Said's Orient could for the large part be described as Islamic and Middle Eastern and the Orientalist discourse he describes is one of essentially reductive, negative generalisations: the Orient is comprised of despotism, sensuality, irrationality, backwardness, degeneracy, deviancy, barbarism, is unchanging and incapable of describing itself. These are characteristics of a 'Muslim mentality' or 'Arab mind'. A key aspect in the critique of Orientalism is the notion of identity, that the West *needed* to constitute the Orient as its Other in order to constitute itself and its own subject position. What lies behind these distortions then, Said argues, is fear and the need to control the Other.

Said's Orientalist discourse is based on a cultural, temporal and geographical distance from the subject which produced specific ideas about the Orient 'out there'. Processes of globalisation⁴ and migration are creating a new awareness of the Other

¹ Specifically: philology, originating in the tendency to classify man and nature into types, circa late 18th Century. In the early 19th Century racial classifications led to the development of a biological basis for racial inequality.

² Said also refers to texts stemming from the ancient civilisations and the influence of Christian ideas in providing the foundations for Orientalism. However, he argues that modern Orientalism derives from the secularising elements of the 18th Century into which traditional Christian thought was reconstituted and represented as rational knowledge. The transformation from textual to geographical Orientalism with colonialism in the 19th Century, brought it fully into a dominant relation, constituting a 'will-to-power' (222). At the time of writing, Said argued that academic Orientalism served Western political and economic interests in the Middle East so much so it was focused on a Cold-War area-studies approach (296) but had also been successful in achieving world-wide hegemony. Said was writing before the Iranian revolution and the rise of political Islam.

³ Including the modern and current forms of economic imperialism.

⁴ 'Globalisation' 'refers to those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organisations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected.' (Giddens, 1990: 64).

requiring a reassessment of how the Orientalist discourse may have changed and adapted to this.

The publication of *Orientalism* provoked a controversial debate regarding its content including a range of criticisms across many disciplines. Most of these criticisms could be said to be textual, emerging from the spaces and ambiguities in Said's text. This makes some of them questionable or at least rectifiable. I identify the most prevalent here, providing some of the shortcomings of the Orientalism thesis that a researcher who attempts to analyse and represent the Other should be aware:

the rejection of the thesis by Orientalists who sought to justify their position and argue that 'pure' scholarship is possible (Lewis, 1982, argued by Mani and Frankenburg, 1985); the inconsistency in the dating of the phenomenon of Orientalism (Ahmad, 1992; Jalal 'al-Azm, 1981); the reduction of political Orientalism to an expression of textual Orientalism (Ahmad, 1992; Jalal 'al-Azm, 1981); the failure to recognise how the discourse may be reconstructed in practice including resistance to it (Wilson, 1981); specific omissions and selectivity including: the failure to acknowledge the role of the native in the development of the Orientalist discourse (Ahmad, 1992; Mani and Frankenburg, 1985); a lack of attention to German scholarship (Kerr, 1980; Irwin, 1981); and omitting the spaces of oppositional work in the Orientalist discourse (Ahmad, 1992; Turner, 1989). Said is also criticised for failing to offer any alternatives to this system of representation (Jalal 'al-Azm, 1981; Mani and Frankenburg, 1985; Turner, 1989). Whilst it could be argued that these omissions are crucial in providing for the unifying feature of the Orientalist discourse, they raise issues relating to the methodological assumption about the relation between the genesis of ideas and their validity. If they are produced in a context of domination are they invalid? (Halliday, 1996).⁵ Sayyid claims the reticence to discuss the fate of Islam after Orientalism by Said is caused by the ambiguities in the text. If Islam is constituted by Orientalism, what happens when Orientalism dissolves? Is the negation of Orientalism the negation of Islam? (Sayyid, 1997: 35). This has resulted in the alternative system of the 'anti-orientalists' which he argues is equally reductionist (Sayyid, 1997: 37-40, see p. 18).

Said's method and his anti-foundationalism in the identification of a discourse have been rejected by Bhatnagar, 1986; Halliday, 1996; Jalal al-'Azm, 1981; Kerr, 1980; and

⁵ This allows for the dismissal of an entire civilisation, the 'West', and therefore has parallels to the Orientalist discourse being criticised.

Turner, 1989. Some of these criticisms are considered to be of importance and will be addressed during the course of this work. This is not to say that I agree with the criticisms but they will be considered and some attempt will be made to answer them. These include:

the questionable status of the 'real' Orient which includes attempts to describe a 'real' Orient in order to assess the accuracy of Orientalist representations (which was not the point of Said's thesis which was to elaborate Orientalism in the context in which a Western discourse about the Orient arose). Also a questioning of Said's position which is caught between seeing Orientalism as a misrepresentation of Islam (see p. 272) and one that sees all 'reality' as 'representations of representations' (273), (Ahmad, 1992; Halliday 1996; Irwin, 1981; Jalal al-'Azm, 1981; Kerr, 1980, Turner, 1989);

the contradiction in the criticism of the Western representation of a monolithic, undifferentiated, reductionist discourse on the Orient which then produces a unified discourse of the West in the same way, strengthening the essentialist categories of both 'Orient' and 'Occident' by emphasising its (Occident's) inherent nature (Ahmad, 1992; Ahmed, 1992; Halliday, 1996; Jalal 'al-Azm, 1981);⁶

and finally that the debate is out of date as globalisation pushes traditional forms of 'society-centred' analysis off the agenda (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Turner, 1989: 635). These criticisms: cross-cultural representation/representation; the construction of a unified Western discourse and the redundancy of Orientalism, raise issues for the approaches I take in my own research. Engaging as am I in an examination of cross-cultural representations, possibly informed by Orientalism, I feel it is important that these problems are addressed. This includes clarifying my own position on 'representation', locating my research within a specific context and avoiding unwarranted generalisations, and by assessing the usefulness of the theory of Orientalism in the current era. I attempt to do this throughout this thesis.

Mani and Frankenburg (1985), however, argued that some of these criticisms failed in their understanding that the three key aspects of Orientalism; historical specificity, knowledge and power cannot be severed for the purpose of analysis (supported by Sayyid, 1997). Examples of some of these criticisms are; firstly, attention to the suggestion that all cultures have the tendency to create self/other dichotomies (Halliday, 1996; Turner, 1989).

⁶ Said is also criticised for the presentation of the tendency to differentiation as a given feature of humanity. He fails to identify this as a social construct rather than 'natural' which also contradicts his appeal to the human ability to transcend existing social relations (Ahmad, 1992; Jalal 'al-Azm, 1981; Mani and Frankenburg, 1985).

This, Mani and Frankenburg (1985) argue, is to assess the production of knowledge without considering differential locations within global relations of power. Secondly, the preoccupation with Said's general questions of cultural representation without reference to historical context which leaves the problems unanswerable.

Other criticisms on the contradictions and even hypocrisies of the text exist. However, the objective here can only be to identify some of these as there is little room to explore their validity in any depth. The weaknesses in the argument are not, however, considered to interfere with the value of the main thesis or totally invalidate it as being applicable to patterns of representation prevalent in 'the West'.⁷ It should become apparent during the course of reading this thesis, that aspects of Said's arguments have continuing relevance. However, the aim in conducting this research has been to show an awareness of the crucial criticisms. It is recognised, however, that a researcher cannot cover all aspects involved in the communication process and so is always open to criticism.

The significance of Orientalism is that it describes the complex historical and cultural circumstances by which a set of institutions progressively developed a 'suitable ideological superstructure with an apparatus of complicated assumptions, beliefs, images, literary productions, and rationalisations' providing the 'underlying foundation' of 'strategic vital interests' about the Orient and Islam (Jalal al-'Azm, 1981: 5). The theory has, therefore, opened up an important debate which has had productive and beneficial results.⁸ It remains significant in having a continuing actuality given the current historical situation which will be detailed in the following section. I would argue that the media is one of those institutions in British society which contributes to a relatively consistent discursive formation of a type of Orientalism⁹ whilst recognising that neither British society, nor the media, its discourse nor Orientalism is a homogenous unitary phenomenon.¹⁰

The Development of the Islamic Other: Historical Context

"Early encounters and confrontations, theological and political, provide the images and folklore which sustain mutual stereotypes, images and suspicions that continue to fuel fears and biases and perpetuate a vision of Islam against the West, of the West against Islam." (Esposito, 1992: 24).

⁷ In the case of my own research, to the British press and its representation of British Islam.

⁸ Although Halliday (1996) argues the theory emerged at the end of the debate negating earlier imperialist literature. However, Orientalism can be seen to have shifted the debate, opening it up in different directions.

⁹ See Ahmed, 1992, for his arguments on the continuing visibility of Orientalism in the press.

¹⁰ It is this institutionalism which Said argues gives the myths employed in relation to Islam 'the authority of a nation' and ensures their persistence (1978: 307).

“the thesis of some enduring, transhistorical hostility to the Orient, the Arabs, the Islamic world, is a myth, albeit one..which many in the region and in the West find it convenient to sustain.” (Halliday, 1996: 211).

The two quotes above imply that the thesis that Islam is a coherent, transnational, monolithic force which has been engaged in a unilinear historical confrontational relationship with the West is a myth. The thesis is argued by Huntington (1996) in his ‘clash of civilisations’, where Islam is considered to constitute a real threat in both military, demographic and socioreligious terms. It is this type of essentialist reading of history that is ultimately responsible for the sort of ‘Orientalist’ attitudes and discourse we see present in ‘the West’ today.

The scholars writing on this subject offer a series of encounters which have been interpreted as illustrative of the historically polarised relationship between Islam and the West, resulting in current perceptions of Islam; its threat and associated exclusionary practices. However, these scholars argue that the movements identified as Islamic have a fractured nature.¹¹ They should be recognised as having a diversity of forms, interests and relations with ‘the West’, coming as they do from specific political, economic and social contexts. Halliday (1996) in particular, in his thesis on ‘the myth of confrontation’ seeks to dispel the myth of a timeless essential truth about the West’s relationship with Islam. He argues that the discourses currently circulating have their basis in contemporary needs and forces and are sustained on both sides for political purposes.

What I seek to do here is to describe those historical encounters that are cited by these authors which formulate the discourse of a historically conflictual relationship. Then I describe the arguments relating to the current political context and its role in the latest manifestation of the demonisation of Islam.

Historically, the first encounter between the West and Islam was based on religious scrutiny from the Christian West. Turner (1989) argues that the clash of religions led to global theories of Otherness, the Other constructed as the morally and ontologically corrupt. Daniel (1993), in particular, shows how medieval Christian texts contained deliberately manipulative anti-Islamic polemic with the specific function of limiting the

¹¹ That is; those political movements that are ‘committed to the rule of law as well as terrorists and oppressive regimes which maintain they are motivated by Islamic principles’ (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b: 8)

growth of Islam in its threat to Christian orthodoxy, reminiscent of Said's work (1978). The progression from scrutiny to actual contact was seen as a product of the universalistic missionary nature of the religions with the aim to expand and conquer (Huntington, 1996).

It was at the point of contact, many theorists argue, that the relationship moved from its religious basis to a political one. Historical events based on military expansion such as: the Crusades, (1095-1270), in part a response to the defeat of the Byzantine Empire; the expulsion of the Moors from Spain in the 13th Century; the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon, 1798; the spread and defeat of the Ottoman Empire, (16th to 19th Century), which saw the creation of Turkey, a Western ally; are cited as early conflictual encounters between Islam and the West that have resulted in an atavistic memory of these events (Ahmed, 1992; Esposito, 1992; Hassan, 1997; Kappert, 1995; Said, 1978).

With the coming of the Enlightenment, and processes of secularisation and modernisation, comparisons of Europe with the Middle East were based on European definitions of modernity and religion as personal belief allowed ideas of superiority to circulate. Thus, the image of the anti-Enlightenment developed in the form of 'despotism' (Kappert, 1995) and Islam became incomprehensible and extreme (Esposito, 1992).

European colonial expansion, followed by post-colonialism (post 1945); the creation of the state of Israel, 1948; as well as the oil crisis of the 1970s, for which the Middle East was blamed, and the Iranian Revolution, 1979 (see p. 25) constitute the modern political factors that are used to explain the rise of Islamism¹² and consequently Western antagonism towards Islam.

Sayyid (1997) estimated that in the mid 1980s around 20 books a year were written with the purpose of explaining the rise of 'Islamic fundamentalism'. The main arguments presented are that:

Western domination in Muslim societies, with the accompanying cultural imperialism, led to a weakening of identities and erosion of culture (Sayyid, 1997);¹³

¹² To call these movements 'Islamic' is to offend the majority of Muslims. I use Sayyid's terminology; 'Islamism' which he defines as 'a discourse that attempts to centre Islam within the political order' (1997: 17; as with Halliday, 1996). He equates it with other political discourses such as socialism and liberalism in their many varieties and differences. The phenomenon has also been called 'political Islam' (Bishara, 1995), and 'Islamic revivalism' by Esposito (1992). Said (1981) objects to its definition as an Islamic resurgence, arguing that Islam has been continually present, the resurgence is political.

¹³ This includes Western media imperialism, indicative of the 'post-modern age', which further adds to the hostility and extremity of Muslims (Ahmed, 1992).

The failure of nationalist secular elites, based on Western models of power and modernity, alongside repressive regimes which lacked participation, maintained ruling elites and failed to meet the aspirations of the people¹⁴ (See Sayyid's review of Kemalism,¹⁵ 1997; a factor also cited by Abu-Rabi, 1997; Ahmed, 1992; Esposito, 1992; and Halliday, 1996);

The artificial nature of the modern nation state was determined by colonial powers who then departed, further undermining its stability, as, for example, with Kashmir (Esposito, 1992);

The crisis of these states, partly caused by rapid but uneven economic development brought about by oil wealth, eroded traditional social ties and generated unreasonable aspirations (Huntington, 1996). Economic stagnation, unemployment and population pressures added to the general disillusionment caused by oppression (Esposito, 1992; Halliday, 1996).

These processes resulted in experiences of dislocation and fragmented identities which led to the reformulation of local traditional identities and values, and the rise of Islamism as a way of coping with change and failure (Ahmed, 1992; Rodinson, 1979; Said, 1981). According to Esposito (1992: 109), 'Islam offered a common set of symbols, historic identity and value systems' which was non-Western, thus acting as a solution to disfranchisement. Sayyid (1997) suggests that by associating the West with the corrupt regimes, the Islamists provided an ethical vocabulary which allowed the rejection and opposition for all that 'the West' stands for. Islamism then positioned itself through the deconstruction of the relation between modernity and the West. According to Sayyid (1997), it is this which made it a politically significant discourse.¹⁶

Halliday (1996) argues that these processes have resulted in an equally essentialist discourse, in relation to a monolithic view of Islam and its ontological difference to the West, by Islamists. This 'Islamic' rhetoric then works to confirm ideas in the West about Islam (Halliday, 1996; Sayyid, 1997: 119).

¹⁴ Sayyid (1997) argues that this restriction of the public space led to the politicisation of the mosque, providing a public space and leading to a politicised religious vocabulary. It is also argued that this led to the disenchantment of the petty bourgeoisie who were disillusioned at not entering power after post-colonial mobilisation and accounts for the educated and professional nature of many Islamic groups (Gilsenan, 1990).

¹⁵ Refers to the Westernised system, established by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, in Turkey, 1924.

¹⁶ See also El-Hodaiby, 1997; Esposito, 1992; Halliday, 1995; Huntington, 1996 and Schulze, 1995 for a discussion on Muslims' problems with Western control over modernity.

The threat to the West then, is in what appears to be an homogenous resurgent global Islamic force with its claims for political independence, denunciations of the West, and challenges to Western supremacy. Islamists also appear to be resistant to change in rejecting Western modernism. However, it is not modernism Islamists are rejecting, but the West. It is the tendency to judge by Western standards which draws this conclusion. An alternative vision of Islamism is with Esposito (1992), Halliday (1997), and Said (1981) who view the movements as based on specific political forces which constitute claims for autonomy and independence. According to Cohen (1997), these movements are based on ethnic disputes for which Islam is used to increase support, but is interpreted as the main criterion in the West.¹⁷ For Esposito (1992), the variety of responses by differing groups is testimony to the flexibility of Islam, the diversity of which, according to Bulliet (1997), in the current climate will only intensify.

Sayyid (1997) rejects both the essential notion of Islam by the 'Orientalists' and what he argues is an equally reductive argument; that of the 'little Islams'. In this, the role of Islam is displaced to various economic, ethnic and social factors of Muslim countries by what Sayyid calls the 'anti-Orientalists', becoming nothing more than a label providing symbolic authority and validation. Where their commonality lies, according to Sayyid (1997: 23) is that both are based on a notion of an 'external force acting upon some notion of a significant Islamic presence' which will eventually explode (as argued by Joffé, 1997). In this way Islam can be used to articulate a multiplicity of positions whilst maintaining its specificity. It is the 'master signifier' to which all other signifiers refer, fixing identity (45). The proliferation of material attempting to explain the rise of Islam continues and so the debate endures. Although these scholars differ on their views of the nature of Islamism, there is agreement that the global events that are associated with Islamist groups have been formulated as a threat in current Western discourse.

The perceived resurgence of Islam coincided with the collapse of the communist bloc (Hassan, 1997; Hippler, 1995; Nonnemann, 1996; Ahmed in Schlesinger, 1993). Hippler (1995) has suggested that during the Cold war, threats to Western interests came from the Soviet Union. Islam was not seen to be threatening as it was also anti-Soviet. This softened its hostile image. To quote Anderson and Rashidian (1991: 127), Iran acted as 'a

¹⁷ For a discussion on the role of religious ideologies in giving value to experiences of political oppression see Berger (1979), Bloch (1986) and Neusner (1984).

fundamentalist curtain' so 'any Soviet moves beyond its borders would be likely to encounter the full wrath of Islam'.

Following the Gulf war, the idea of Islam the threat was reinvigorated by 'Orientalists' such as Bernard Lewis (1990; this argument can be found in Ahmed, 1992; Bresheeth and Yuval-Davis, 1991 and is argued from both 'within' Islam as well as from 'without'). According to Huntington's thesis (1996), the New World Order is based on patterns of conflict and co-operation founded on cultural distinctions and identifications, 'the clash of civilisations'. Huntington himself talks of 'the indigestibility of Muslims' (264) and their 'propensity towards violent conflict' which makes them threatening (258). Thus, the result of such polar models is a 'cultural anomie' (Bishara, 1995: 87) where two new global orders made up of 'opposing cultural ecologies', The Information Society Paradigm and Islamic Community Paradigm, struggle for power (Mowlana, 1993). For both Huntington (1996) and Mowlana (1993), the former has dominance but the latter constitutes a significant force. Its strength and therefore threat is seen to lie in Muslims not being contained by nation state or any other geographical, political treaty boundaries in a time where nation states are no longer the sole political and economic influences on the international system. For Sayyid (1997) and Ahmed (1993), this amounts to a total shift in the global order, what Ahmed calls a 'new phase in human history', a decentering of the West. According to this thesis, Islam is a challenge to the Western world which is caused to question its identity. On this basis, it is necessary for the West to reaffirm its identity to preserve it from dissolution (Huntington, 1996; Kramer, 1997).

However, this, according to Halliday (1996) constitutes a second myth about Islam. It is not the religious or cultural character of Islam that is a threat, but the fear of loss of power and of anti-Western sentiments (Hippler, 1995). In the current situation, Islam would be seen as most threatening if it endangered Western interests in the Middle East. The loss of control over oil prices would lead to a loss of control and power for, in particular, the US, and would threaten their image as the number one superpower. Western activities against Islamic countries are defended under the guise that Islamic militancy threatens Western security (Djerejian, 1997). An example of the contradictions in this ideology can be seen in the support the USA has given to Islamic countries and groups; Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, General Zia's Islamic Fundamentalist programme when it has *served their interests*. This has often been against secular countries such as Iraq. It is also a threat that

allows the West to keep on building up its arms. According to Hippler (1995) and Halliday (1996), the religious element is convenient to the West, allowing them to avoid having to examine and deal with the real problems, the socio-economic causes. The link with religion in Western perceptions allows only one response: that of irrationality which makes dialogue and policy-making difficult (Esposito, 1992; Hippler, 1995). According to Hassan (1997), and Halliday (1992), the apparent global phenomenon of Islam with a mission to take over the world is made all the more questionable by the actuality of Islamist movements, which is one of weakness. Their behaviour is more likely to be based on defensive motives in attempting to prevent the breakdown of their communities rather than being offensive; and their conflicts are more likely to be with other regional groups than with the West.¹⁸

Islam has therefore been rediscovered and interpreted as a counter-alternative to the West. Halliday (1996) suggests that Islam fulfils the Western need for a menacing but subordinated Other and thus fills Esposito's 'threat vacuum' (1992: 3). This conceptualisation is supported by the image of the global aggressor: Islam, as Muslims are seen to constitute a problem to many countries including India, Israel, Russia, the USA and a number of European countries.

Whilst at the current time, Hippler (1995) argues, Western foreign policy does not match the ideology of Islam as a threat in the Western media, these images of 'the enemy' have created the politico-psychological prerequisites to justify military action if necessary (Gomeshi, 1994 in Mir, 1998; Said, 1981).

Whether one believes the threat to be cultural or political, significant or a myth, these scholars are in no doubt that the 'imagined' threat has resulted in the development of 'Eurocentrism',¹⁹ an attempt by the West to recentre itself, re-establishing Western supremacy. This project is held together by Western global power which attempts to create an invisible empire through cultural domination. Islam fails to recognise the universalism of Western project, so remains the Other the West cannot embrace, even at its most tolerant (Sayyid, 1997).

¹⁸ This is an example of writers referring to a 'real Orient' to counter the 'distorted' image of Islam. Although I am giving expression to these here, I will not continue with this practice whilst presenting my own findings due to my own ideas about representation and reality, see p. 25.

¹⁹ A cultural phenomenon based on the principle 'West knows best', a project which attempts to sustain the universality of the Western project (under conditions where this may no longer be viable) (Sayyid, 1997: 127, see Shohat and Stam, 1994 for their critique of Eurocentrism within popular culture).

One of the problems with these arguments is the Occidentalism which allows the West to be unified and denies the diversity and conflicts within its own past and present. Although 'the West' incorporates numerous countries, I would suggest that these writers are primarily referring to the USA, followed by Europe. It is perhaps US foreign policy which primarily defines itself in relation to Islam in the ways described here. Is it the case that Europe, in particular, Britain, follows this example and falls into US foreign policy speak? Yet these countries have had different historic relationships with Islam and the Middle East. From these arguments, it would appear that the media ignores this and follows the US ideological construction of Islam. This is something that will be examined within the demographic context of the UK. Although I have tried to separate here where writers are referring to Europe and Britain, it is sometimes difficult to establish which part of 'the West' is being implied. This is apparent in the following sections.

Movements in Europe

The current turmoil and fragmentation in Europe caused by shifts in the global order, including the ambiguity of boundaries in Eastern Europe, have resulted in a lack of political certainties and alliances. This has led to a need to identify a common cultural heritage with a criterion for where Europe begins and ends. The revitalised concern with Islam is an additional source of xenophobic hostility by Western European countries, according to Husband (1994b). He argues that countries, becoming more 'fragile and neurotic' (6) due to varying economic and cultural assaults, have been experiencing 'a highly sensitised self-conscious negotiation of their concept of the nation' (8). Attempts to maintain the status quo have seen the emergence of 'Fortress Europe' as countries build bigger barriers to protect themselves from invasion from 'outsiders' (Bunyan, 1991; Esposito, 1992; Gilroy, 1988; van Dijk, 1994). Lueg (1995: 25) suggests it is the fear of the third world with its poverty, disorganisation and disease which is seen to be migrating West which combines with other destabilising trends to create a 'fear of the future'.

What this amounts to is Ahmed's (1992: 32) 'postmodern condition', where fragmentary identities, a 'cultural schizophrenia', has resulted in their reinforcement in traditional ways (See also Nonneman, 1996; Peach and Glebe, 1995 for this argument). This has led to the growth of an ethnocentric nationalism in the West which could result in an escalation of confrontation as Eastern countries have more reason to be more anti-Western.

In the current climate of uncertainties, by constructing the Islamic world in this way, according to Lueg (1995: 41), the West fulfils a 'psycho-political need', reassuring itself by contrasting itself to others; 'Europe's efforts to reassure itself have been traditionally directed towards the East, until today it continues to find its antithesis there'. Lueg (1995) also suggests that it is the site for the projection of negative aspects of Western culture, that if the situation is worse there, the West has less need to criticise itself (also argued by Hippler & Lueg, 1995; Taskhiri, 1993; and Nonnemann, 1996).²⁰ This construction is inverted, with images of the West in the Middle East being equally negative due to experiences of colonial domination and exploitation and fuelled by ideas of immorality in the West (Ahmed in Schlesinger, 1993; Hippler & Lueg, 1995). The result of the construction of the cultural clash in the media is mutually antagonistic perspectives and misunderstandings which seem unsolvable. But the myth has its purpose in the need to assert a post communist hegemony.

The British context

These global/ European experiences translate to the local which will now be examined in order to establish the British political and social context.

Processes of globalisation, according to Robins (1991) are both eroding national identities and strengthening 'local' ones. This 'crisis of identity', seen globally, is reflected locally as resistance by host nations to the strengthening of minority identities and the loss of their own has led to an increase in ethnic absolutism in the form of 'national culture' (Gellner, 1983; Mercer, 1990). Halliday (1996) argues that this is a process by which groups make selective use of the past, reinventing it to justify aspects of the present. Thus, the aim becomes to 'rebuild an identity that coheres, is unified and filters out threats in social experiences' (Sennett, 1971: 15). It also constitutes a defensive strategy by minorities experiencing 'cultural racism'.²¹

The experience of migration adds to the dislocation through exposure to new values. Alienation, responses to controls on immigration, unemployment and discrimination all add to feelings of loss. Islam has offered a sense of identity and values to offset the psychological disaffection (Esposito, 1992).

²⁰ For example; the lack of tolerance and freedom of speech the West is showing in relation to Islam is hidden in its transference onto Islam where these characteristics are exaggerated, problematised and essentialised.

²¹ For a discussion on the shift from biological racism to cultural or new racism see Cohen, 1988; Gordon and Klug, 1986; Hall, 1992b; Giroux, 1994; Reeves, 1983; Robins, 1991.

Recent specific events in Britain can be identified as bringing the presence of Muslims into public awareness and have led to the growth of a Muslim consciousness. Ahmed (1992) suggests that The Rushdie Affair was the catalyst for the British demonisation of Muslims, exposing the vast gaps in understandings of each other. This, and some Muslim support for Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War, led to a questioning of the loyalty of Muslims within (Werbner, 1994). The response for Ahmed (1992: 113) was based on an undervalued powerless community's 'cry of identity', which in turn sharpened the sense of a Muslim identity(ies) and led to the politicisation of Muslims (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994). This has been interpreted as Muslim separatism and therefore a 'threat within' (Halliday, 1996).

Global coverage of world events through the media, along with feelings of isolation and cultural threat from the host community, allow feelings of empathy and solidarity across space and time, promoting the idea of the world-wide eternal 'Muslim community' (Cohen, 1997). This has resulted, according to Vertovec (1996), in a transference of the anti-Western threatening stance of global fundamentalist groups to British Muslims, who have increasing prominence in the public sphere due to improved organisation and political articulation (supported by Ahmed, 1992).²² However, Vertovec suggests that this should be interpreted as an attempt by migrant groups to exercise their liberal rights, often representing panic about how to maintain control in the community and responses to their exclusionary treatment, not extremism (1996). Halliday (1996) also argues that the appearance of solidarity with other countries is usually based on secular reasons, such as the need for funding, rather than a solidarity based on faith.

These processes have led to Muslim communities in Britain being constituted as a threat by the wider public. The contemporary manifestation of this Orientalist discourse has been defined as 'Islamophobia'.²³ In Britain then, as elsewhere, Islam has come to be represented as a homogenous threat despite representing differing sects, ethnicities, and language groups who have been further fragmented through emigration. The ideology of a fundamentalist threat does allow the British government to suppress the activities of Muslims at home. This has recently been seen in the suppression of 'terrorist' dissidents in

²² This global hostility (of Muslims) is also transferred via the media to the non-Muslim community resulting in further antagonism.

²³ Halliday (1996) prefers the term 'anti-Muslimism' as he argues that antipathy is directed at the Muslim people not the Islamic doctrine.

London, amid fears of US embassy attacks following the American air strikes on Afghanistan, aimed at Osama bin Laden (August, 1998). However, the intention of this thesis is to show that despite the largely negativisation of Islam, the political social necessity of integrating minority groups has meant, especially in recent times, that in the UK minorities are allowed space in the public sphere to avoid dislocation and extremism. Hence the image of British Islam is expected to be less extreme than that of its global Other.

To summarise, it has been argued that Islam is currently defined as a world-wide homogenous threat to 'the West' both physically and ideologically. The counter argument maintains that the rise of Islamism, in actuality, comprises heterogeneous movements defined and determined by national state and rival political factions and thus Islam cannot be an explanatory factor for all Muslim behaviour.

Rather than see the relationship between Islam and the West as having a unilinear history, I would prefer to see it as constructed in historical moments where crises have led to popular discourses reflecting the needs of the time. The current resurgence in the demonisation of Islam then, is due to a specific political context. As Said has already identified, an Orientalist discourse is a product of certain 'cultural, professional, national, political, and economic requirements of the epoch' (1978: 273). It is the specific epochs that I have examined here. The current epoch is one whereby opposing sides use an essentialist discourse and historical relation of confrontation to justify specific actions, to 'legitimise, mislead, silence and mobilise' (Halliday, 1996: 7). However, despite shifts in the reasons for demonisation, discourse relating to Islam has remained relatively ideologically coherent and consistent from early Christian constructions to the present day whilst being reinforced and transformed to different degrees to meet the requirements of the time. What I have attempted here, as Halliday recommends, is to reveal the myth which should allow us to see the agenda behind it, usually concealed by media production processes which render the product neutral. I will now examine the arguments currently available on the specific form that those images take.

The Representation of Islam: Islam the Media Villain²⁴

The bulk of literature on Islam and the West deals with explanations as to why Islam is interpreted as a threat, the social/ political context, and pays only fleeting attention to the resulting representations. However, representations must be analysed in relation to the national and international context of power relations. These theories concerning the *global* image of Islam, although consensual, are based on observations rather than systematic empirical evidence and are presented alongside arguments relating to what the authors consider to be 'the actuality'. This belies the tendency of these authors to see the coverage of Islam as 'misrepresentation', implying there is a reality or 'truth' about Islam which could be represented accurately.²⁵ Once again, Said (1981) in his follow-up work to *Orientalism* draws our attention to the problems of cross-cultural representation. He maintains that whilst he is not suggesting that there is a real Islam out there to be represented (as the religion itself will always be subject to interpretation) there are gradations of knowledge - good/bad/accurate and indifferent (also argued by Miles, 1996). Mir (1998) however, questions the idea of a simple choice between self-representation and representation by a hegemonic or unsympathetic Other. She argues that due to processes of globalisation and the increasing plurality of societies, identities are not so distinctly aligned. At the end of *Covering Islam* (1981), Said concedes that it is possible to know or represent the Other fairly under certain conditions. This is a debate that will be raised again but for now the aim here is to describe the 'Islam(s)' that is 'the result of agreed-upon convention, historical processes, assigned identity' (Said, 1981: 42).

Given the apparent origins in *Orientalism* of the images presented here, I begin with Said's *Covering Islam*, subtitled '*How the Media and Experts Determine how we see the rest of the World*' (1981). In this text Said reveals the Orientalist discourse present in US media coverage of the US Embassy siege in Iran, 1981. For Said, this was a significant moment in both cementing current manifestations of the Orientalist discourse through which Islam has become 'known' and the point from which media coverage of Islam increased dramatically. In particular, Said identifies the 1979 Iranian Revolution as being the initial signifier to the West of the resurgence of Islam and its problematisation, with the result that

²⁴ It should be noted that the representations described here are based on images of Islam prevalent in the current political climate. Illustrating how themes prevail but are adapted to suit the political purposes of the time is the image of the oil-rich Sheikh with his harem which dominated the 1970s following the oil crisis but has diminished in recent press constructions of Muslims.

²⁵ Albeit diverse and changing *realities* as opposed to an essential Islam.

Iran has come to symbolise relations with the Islamic world. Thus, Muslims are associated with militancy, danger and anti-Western sentiment. He argues that the eradication of any social/historical context involved in the reporting of the siege resulted in perceptions of Muslim terrorists holding the US to hostage. In fact, Said argues that through ignorance, cultural hostility and racial hatred, Islam is not allowed to be known, it is 'covered up'. It is the media which is the 'cultural apparatus' through which Europeans and Americans derive their consciousness of Islam (43). As with Orientalism, Said argues that media images are informed by official definitions of Islam which serves the interests of government and business. The success of the image then is not in its accuracy but is due to the power of the people who produce it, the triumph of which is hardly challenged; 'labels have survived many experiences and have been capable of adapting to new events, information and realities' (Said, 1981: 9).²⁶ It is to these 'labels' I now turn.

Texts written post Said have a discursive consistency in identifying the same derogatory themes and topics associated with Islam. In a global context this would mainly appear to be with regard to fundamentalism or political instability and the portrayal of women (Ahmed, 1992). The application of a Western ideological framework or alternatively ethnocentric 'ways of seeing' (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982: 45; Hall, 1992a) or Ahmed's (1992: 186) 'Anglicisation of ideas, values and behaviour of Muslims' have resulted in the 'domesticated Islamic world or those aspects considered to be newsworthy' (Said, 1981: 26). The dichotomisation between East and West is a consequence of this, presented in the press along a series of binary oppositions where the West stands for rational, humane, developed, superior and the East, in particular Islam, aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. The concentration on cultural dualities as opposed to political processes contributes to this confrontational dichotomy and acts, according to Dahlgren and Chakrapani (1982), as a form of cultural reassurance.

The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (The Runnymede Trust, 1997a & b), after consultation with a number of Islamic groups and their own review of the literature, developed their own framework of representation in terms of 'closed' views of Islam as opposed to 'open' views. They suggest that whilst on some occasions closed views

²⁶ Said's theory relating to Iran is similarly applicable to media coverage of the Gulf war. For a full discussion on this debate see Gerbner (1992), Kellner (1992a), Mowlana et al (1992), Norris (1991), Shaw (1996), Taylor (1992) who argue that the media was managed by the Western governments involved, who provided little access to battle zones and resulted in depictions that were distorted but coherent with government ideologies.

of Islam may be applicable to the policies and programmes of some Islamist groups elsewhere, however, an undifferentiated image of Islam is entirely inappropriate in relation to Muslims living in the UK. They suggest that discourse relating to Islam can be placed into eight main categories. These are as follows:

- 1) Muslim cultures are seen to be unchanging and monolithic
- 2) Muslim cultures are wholly different from other cultures
- 3) Islam is inferior/ different- barbaric/ irrational/ primitive/ sexist
- 3) Islam is threatening
- 4) Islam's adherents use the faith for political advantage
- 5) Muslims' criticisms of the West are rejected out of hand
- 6) Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices
- 7) Islamophobia is assumed to be unproblematic (1997a & b).

These themes are interconnected and will now be explored. Ignoring the diversity and differences between Muslims is common in discourse about Islam. For Said, (1981) the homogenisation of Muslims works as an 'ideological cover' which contributes significantly to ignorance regarding the Other. Thus, each Muslim is given the burden of responsibility, only ever responsible for representing Islam. The result being that the limited representations of Islam described here are applied to all Muslims with little distinction. (A practice identified by Eade, 1990; The One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993; Sayyid, 1997; and Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1993.) The homogenisation of groups has also been found in more general research on ethnic minorities and television (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1995). This uniformity, alongside dichotomisation with 'the West', means Islam is always represented in terms of difference rather than having any commonalities with the West.²⁷

In fact, as has been previously argued, Halliday (1995) maintains that Muslims are even more fragmented than Christians in terms of their varying nationalities, regions, politics, sects, languages etc. Demographics such as age, gender, class and education should also be taken into account. According to Halliday, this is further compounded, in Britain, by the absence of a central leadership and by the process of immigration. Werbner (1991)

²⁷ Opposition is always defined in terms of Islam and the West rather than Islam and Christianity or East and West. This is partly due to conceptualisations regarding the different civilisations but makes it harder to find commonalities between them. Whilst 'Islam' as a collectivity is used unproblematically, to represent Christianity as 'the West' is deemed problematic.

suggests that this diversity is reflected by internal divisions within the community on who represents it, for example, when bidding for council funding (also in Raza, 1993).²⁸ This process has caused friction between the communities, fragmenting them in an environment where collectivity is needed for strength. Westwood's (1991) research into the black youth group, Red Star, shows how groups can be more successful politically when they stress their commonality above difference. We have seen in the previous section how this 'universal cover' has been used as a key to understanding how Muslim groups behave in social and political arenas yet the evidence of various practices and differences shows how Islam cannot be used as a sole explanation for behaviour but other factors should be invoked (Halliday, 1995).

One of the methods used by media makers, it is argued, that adds to this effect is the repeated selection of more extreme individuals and sources (who claim) to represent the community. This is strongly objected to by Muslims and other minority groups (Esposito, 1992; The Runnymede Trust, 1997a & b; Gunter and Viney, 1993; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1995).²⁹

The static nature of Muslim cultures is represented in the form of despotism linked to social stagnation (Ahmed, 1992; Said, 1978). The Western ideology of modernisation and the Islamicisation of Muslim politics has provided a way of seeing Islam as anti-modern (when, in fact, it is doctrinally blameless) (Said, 1981).³⁰ According to Hassan, 1997; Lueg, 1995 and Morris, 1989, this has allowed a discourse of Western superiority to Islam to prevail so the West is seen as more progressive in terms of its strengths, systems and human rights.

The idea of Muslim societies as being medieval is refuted by Schulze (1995). He argues that Islamic societies have their own version of modernity that shares many aspects of the universal kind but has also been shaped by Islamic cultural traditions. Islam as the antithesis of modernity disguises the multitude of political positions and worldviews present in the discourse of heterogeneous civil Islamic society. The West's hypocrisy in the fight for

²⁸ Although this has been manipulated by policy which promotes a 'divide and rule' ethos in competition for funding.

²⁹ This practice was repeatedly denounced at a recent training day for Muslims, 'Making the most of the media' run by the Muslim Council of Britain (10/11th October, 1998). The aim was to train Muslim community leaders who represent the moderate majority to become more proactive in representing themselves so a greater diversity of voices can be heard.

³⁰ See Hall (1992b) for theories regarding the formation of the modern nation state which, it is argued, was constituted by different historical processes working together which resulted in the dominance of secular, materialist, rationalist and individualist cultural values with the separation of public and private.

democracy versus turmoil and terrorism is illustrated by its support of repressive regimes such as Saudi Arabia.

Hall (1992a) argues that this aspect of Orientalist discourse results in Muslims being subject to 'rituals of degradation'. Thus, they are represented as uncivilised and barbaric. Hassan (1997) suggests that by focusing on stories of inhumane punishments in the Muslim world and ignoring stories about their victimisation, this creates a distorted picture of Muslims for a public who have few alternative images (Gunter and Viney, 1993; The One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993).

Misogyny and the myth of Muslim women are images also used to reinforce the idea of oppression at the 'hands of an ancient religion', particularly accentuated by the 'medieval' dress of women (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b; Lueg, 1995; Gunter and Viney, 1993; Sayyid, 1997).³¹

Furthermore, the discourse of backwardness is compounded by the supposed conflictual *nature* of Islam, further strengthened by images of extremism, fanaticism and irrationality (Ahmed, 1992; Esposito, 1992; Said, 1978). Hassan (1997) suggests by linking every conflict concerning Arabs or Palestine to the concept of *jihad* and Islam, all Muslims are considered to be extreme. This contributes to a cumulative conception of Islam as threatening. According to Lueg (1995: 15), this is based on images of 'oriental irrationality and the fanatical masses' which allows Muslims to be kept at a distance and impersonalised. This concept of 'the crowd' was explored by Le Bon in 1895 who argued that imagery surrounding 'the crowd' suggested a natural primitiveness and irrationality. This idea was advanced by Hansen and Murdock (1985: 231), who suggested that in the populist discourse of newspaper coverage of the 1981 Toxteth riots, the crowd was shown as 'an illegitimate form of expression' as opposed to the legitimate form of democracy, based on 'irrationality' rather than rational choices, on collectivity rather than individual participation, on 'violence and extremism' rather than 'orderliness and moderation'. The use of unfavourable terminology in relation to Muslims is seen as another aspect of their dehumanisation in the media (Hassan, 1997). The 'fundamentalist' is one example of this.

This is, by far, the most prevalent image which constitutes a threat (Lueg, 1995). By omitting to associate it as part of a larger resurgence of political religious movements such

³¹ Feminist writers have elaborated on the distortion of Islam by patriarchal cultures. See Badawi (1995), Nazlee (1996), Yamani (1996).

as the Christian Coalition, and paying little attention to, for example, Jewish religious fanaticism, Sayyid (1997) argues that Islamic fundamentalism has become a metaphor for fundamentalism in general (also see Ahmed, 1992; Esposito, 1992; Said, 1981 for this argument). According to Said (1981) and Esposito (1992), extremity is constituted as fundamentalism which is then linked to terrorism. In actual fact, as Bishara (1995) maintains, there is a huge difference between fundamentalism, which Bishara calls 'political religion', and the popular religion which most Muslims, particularly those living in Britain, adhere to. Bishara goes further to say that the activities of the radical movements under the banner of Islam has actually distanced them from the majority of 'normal' Muslims. In the previous section the threat of Islam was denounced as a myth, with regard to the fundamentalist threat, Hassan (1997) argues that in reality these groups are small and loosely-organised. Esposito (1992) suggests that their membership often consists of intellectual, educated people who want to work within the established order (as opposed to primitive barbarians intent on terrorism).

Islam is further seen as threatening through depictions of an alien culture. This is not a new phenomenon. Ethnic minority groups have long been depicted as the alien Other and as threatening due to mass immigration, by use of the rhetorical device of 'them' and 'us' in popular discourse suggesting 'we' are under attack. Blacks and Jews are relevant examples of this. In Britain, it would seem that the most important thing about manifestations of Islam within is whether they are pro or anti the UK.³² This discourse is presented as common-sensical, reflecting the thoughts of every 'right minded person' thus 'purging' its links with particular power structures and interests (Hansen and Murdock, 1985: 230). The recurring theme of immigration being a problem has now shifted to Muslims, in particular, due to the population explosion in the Middle East and third world (van Dijk, 1994; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; Lueg, 1995). This conception of Islam as the new enemy is achieved through images of invasion and infiltration. British Muslims in their uniformity to other Muslims become the 'fifth column' within and their loyalty is constantly in question (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b). The portrayal in numbers moving across borders further provokes ideas about desires to take over the world. The combination of the hostile threat

³² The tendency to present issues on the basis of assimilation or protest can be seen in the coverage of The Rushdie Affair and educational issues.

and movement of Islam promotes the idea that it needs to be managed allowing all kinds of prejudicial practices to continue.

However, Esposito (1992) argues, as it was with the USSR, that these images blind us to the real extent of the threat. In reality, Islam is far from a threat, it is Muslims that are the victims of oppression. Most live in the underdeveloped world, with its poverty, illiteracy combined with the geo-politics of the West, they are far removed from global power (Hassan, 1997).

Despite the consistency of these images, contradictory images abound. Islam is monolithic but sectarian. Islam is fixed and an excuse for adapting what is outside Islam (which allows Muslims to be seen as manipulative). Islam is a threat but inferior. This 'dual vision' reveals the functional aspect of the discourse which positions Islam according to desired needs (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982: 55).

These constitute the representations of Muslims on a global scale, a limited range of stereotypes lacking in positive and apolitical images, a representation which appears to tell us more about the representers than represented. This system of representation would seem to be typical of reporting on the Third World in general with the lack of political explanations and history, the routinisation of violence within a framework of instability (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982). But given the determining factor, the political context of the discourse, does this imply a perhaps wider range of representations on a local scale, in a British national context? Research shows there are some examples of positive coverage which had positive intentions in the UK such as the BBC programmes *Living Islam* and *Mahabarat* (Gunter & Viney, 1993; The One World Broadcasting Trust, 1993). Ahmed (1992) pays tribute to the engagement of Channel 4. The war in Bosnia is an example of the image of 'victimhood' which has developed as a counter image in recent years (Mannisto, 1997). However, it is accepted that these tend to be one-off programmes and do not represent the coverage overall. The categorisation of the Kosovar Albanians as Muslim has been minimal within the vast coverage on the war with Serbia, 1999.

The Commission for British Muslim and Islamophobia (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b) focus solely on the image of Islam in the content of the British media and their findings match those described above. They pay particular attention to imagery in cartoons and how they work, drawing on 'stock images', their repetition giving stereotypes about Islam 'greater currency and credibility such that they become part of common-sense,

something to be taken completely for granted' (1997b: 21). However, they do not differentiate between representations of British Muslims and Muslims living elsewhere. Critical of all sectors of the British media, including the liberal press who, they argue, are guilty of an exclusionary liberalism, on the one hand fighting against racism and on the other deriding Islam and Muslims. However, they barely differentiate between the different sectors of the British media. The purpose of this research is to examine 'local' representations of local people. Do they match theories relating to global images of Islam, and if not, what are the local factors impinging on these representations?

The sort of coverage that has been described here results in an 'identikit' Muslim, chosen for his/her ability to fit into the above pre-conceived categories (Sardar, *The One World Broadcasting Trust*, 1993: 32). These arguments correspond with theories and research on ethnic minorities and the media in Britain and other European countries (van Dijk, 1994). Findings shows ethnic minorities are critical of: their negative portrayal; marginalisation to specific issues; the lack of provision and poor scheduling of minority programming; undifferentiated, peripheral, rarely 'realistic' and one-sided portrayals (Halloran, Bhatt and Gray, 1995; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1995). Dislike of Islam cannot be seen as the defining feature of hostility towards it, this includes a complex mixture of xenophobia and racism. The supposed shift from skin colour to cultural practices as 'the ethnic signifier', with Muslims often being an explicit projection of both, has also increased their visibility (Hall, 1977; see also Asad, 1990). It is therefore necessary to examine arguments relating to the representation of ethnic groups which are considered in the following section.

The Representation of Ethnic Minorities³³

The extensive area of race research has predominated in the area of representations but has also looked to investigate production processes for providing a framework for explaining various forms of representation and also includes limited research on minority media and audience reception.³⁴ A full review of all areas is beyond the scope of this thesis.

³³ Attention will be limited to the Other within the UK due to the specific focus in this research on British Muslims and will not include the vast area of foreign news coverage.

³⁴ For research on the understudied area of minority media see: for studies conducted by mainstream media on the extent and effects of their ethnic programming: Anwar and Shang, 1984; Blanchard and Morley, 1982; Cottle, 1993; Daniels, 1990; Fountain, 1988; Husband and Chouhan, 1985. For studies on minority press see Benjamin, 1995; Chase, 1975/6; Shamsher and Russell, 1976; Solanki, 1975/6; Tatla and Singh, 1986.

For this reason, this section will deal with findings in the area of representations alone. However, some attention will be paid to production studies in the next section and to audience research in Chapter 2, p. 56.

Whilst these research areas can be associated with specific historical moments in the wider context of mass media research, they can also be seen as ongoing and overlapping phases, as definitions of race are politically and historically contested, resulting in their continual transformation.

The history of race reporting is based on a specific colonial history, according to Hall (1992a), who argues that early expansion led to an over-simplified 'system of representation' based on a dichotomy of the 'West and the rest' through which difference became the standard by which the West's achievements were measured. This, according to Silverman and Yuval-Davis (1998) has developed in the post-colonial period into a conceptual framework based on a race relations paradigm which assumes racism affects races in terms of commonwealth countries, thus excluding others from this discourse. Institutional categorisation based on race has defined social relations and determined both mediations of the Other and research on this basis. Presented here is a brief overview of research in the area.

Studies into the representation of race in the media have resulted in a consistency of findings whilst methodological and theoretical approaches to the subject have been developed and refined over time. Early approaches concentrated on the ideological role of the media in securing social consent, whilst the growth of a discursive approach in the 1980s led to an examination of the text as a site of hegemonic struggle where changing significations of race are given expression. This allowed for a recognition of a degree of differentiation between genres and individual media products and texts.

Overwhelmingly, studies have found a limited (but not fixed) range of discourses on race characterised by: its problematisation; immigrants as the site and source of problems contrasted with the tolerant host society; its location within oppositional, confrontational frameworks which pursued conflict and hostility; association with negativity and lack of role diversity.

These forms of racialising events have been studied through systematic content analysis of a range of media forms in the context of: immigration, (Cricher et al, 1977; Downing, 1975; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; Hartmann et al, 1974; Troyna, 1981);

crime, law and order, the 'alien within', the criminalisation of black youth, (Chibnall, 1977; Gearing, 1985; Hall, 1975; Hall et al, 1978; Smith, 1985; Solomos, 1988; Troyna, 1987); and in particular focusing on inner city disturbances in the 1980s, (Cohen and Gardner, 1982; Hollingsworth, 1986; Joshua et al, 1983; Murdock, 1984; Murray, 1986; Sumner, 1982). News reports were found to privilege a law and order discourse displacing attention away from structural inequalities and racism associated with colonial subjugation which was seen to have significant implications for public perceptions and policy (Cottle, 1992). Although these discourses are applicable to all minorities it should be noted that the press problematises minority groups in different ways and assigns stereotypical roles to them, so the breakdown of the family may be a problem for Afro-Caribbean representation but not for Asians.

Current research interests reflect a dissatisfaction with the narrow basis on which race has previously been perceived. The marginalisation of some groups within the black/white paradigm as well as the 'racialised boundaries' it reproduces and changing social and political realities have led to a re-thinking of black cultural politics along the lines of the politics of ethnicity (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Gilroy, 1987, 1988, 1997; Hall, 1988). Increasingly questions are being asked regarding definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity based on processes of globalisation and postmodernism which have resulted in a fluidity of cultural identities. New cinematic forms such as the black documentary realist genre are generating interest as examples of the creative reworking of cultural forms, experiences and expressions of fragmentation and displacement (Hall, 1988; Mercer, 1988; Julian and Mercer, 1988). It is through an acknowledgement of these processes and their effects that has resulted in a wider context of debate whereby 'different histories, traditions and ethnic identities' are recognised, that a space has opened up to include Muslims (both in terms of identifications and discriminations).³⁵

It is generally considered that there has been some broadening of the regime of representation of 'black' people as a result of a 'struggle around the image' (Hall, 1997b: 257).³⁶ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, at a conference on Islam and the media organised by The

³⁵ i.e. are being recognised by researchers who are asking more questions about ethnic identity.

³⁶ Although this has resulted in 'modern racism' (Entman, 1990: 332), a more implicit protection of white interests. This theory has been criticised by Romer et al (1998) for emphasising the role of individual prejudice suggesting that replacing journalists with non-racists would eliminate ethnocentric biases. This is unlikely on the basis of dominant market forces within the context of the wider social system (see the following section).

One World Broadcasting Trust (1993: 5), suggested that on this basis there are possibilities for the improvement of the representation of Muslims *provided there is some awareness of the representations and their consequences in the public arena*. But in a climate of the unacceptability of racism, the more explicit discourses applied to former groups have shifted to an acceptable enemy: Muslims. As Said (1981: 149) argued, this discourse has now entered the 'cultural canon' and consequently will be very difficult to change.

Examining the representational paradigm on race allows a comparison with that of Islam. Have the 'repertoires of representation' around difference simply shifted to focus on Muslims, (in Hall's words, 1997b), or has there been a shift to cultural relativism in the press, the politics of ethnicity being played out there? This question will be considered in relation to the findings of this project which establishes a framework of representation of Islam. Although Muslims are considered to be a minority group, this is based on a religious collectivity rather than ethnic. It is therefore considered equally important to consider arguments regarding the representation of religion in developing the conceptual frames for this project.

Representing Religion

Research into the representation of religion also reveals a general concern about the derision of religion and religious people in popular television forms. Gunter and Viney (1993), in their research on religious broadcasting in Britain amongst multi-religious audiences, found that there was a general concern, (80%), that the media compounds negative images and inaccurate stereotypes, distorting ideas about religion. Other research in this area has mainly been completed in America around Christian traditions, concentrating on religious groups and their encounters with the media rather than religious representation and the general population. Studies have focused on religious audiences' attitudes and use of mass media (Abelman, 1987; Finnegan and Viswanath, 1988; Grunig, 1979; Hamilton and Rubin, 1992; Roberts, 1983; Stout and Buddenbaum, 1996), and have shown that people are attracted to content which is most congruent with their own needs and values (Bainbridge and Stark, 1981; Buddenbaum, 1982; Roberts, 1983; Wood and Hughes, 1984) and are regular newspaper readers, particularly of local papers (Rigney and Hoffman, 1993; Sobal and Jackson-Beeck, 1981; Stamm and Weiss, 1986; Westley and Severin, 1964). Abelman (1991) and Houghland et al (1990) have demonstrated how negative news is more

persuasive in reducing support for particular religions than positive news is in generating support. The main problem with studies on mass media and religious groups has been the measurement of religiosity which has been defined, on the whole, as attendance to a place of worship.

The central issue to this project is whether 'the media' can ever capture any religion effectively given its secular nature and attention to 'surface appearance', situated, as it is, in a commercial environment? (Longley in Viney, 1993: 4; Shayon and Cox, 1994; Walter, 1996). Secularisation theory has it that as society becomes more secular, religion will be increasingly seen as a more primitive way of life (Merton, 1957). The media, as a modern institution in a secular society, will reflect this. Religion, therefore, is also an Other which becomes more problematic when it involves non-Christian religions, entailing all the difficulties of cross-cultural representation. An examination of the context within which media products are produced is essential to understanding the nature of output. Few studies have been implemented on religious representation in the news, given that it is the focus of this project, it is considered essential to examine the conditions of news production and the consequences for representations of Islam.

The Manufacture of News

"The marketplace is plutocracy, not democracy. Markets are run by establishments that safeguard their own freedoms but do not confer them on others unless forced. Market driven mass media like to speak in the name of the public but shun, marginalise, or criminalise public views that are not saleable to large groups of paying customers. The principle challenge to democratic theory and practice today is the rise to dominance of a single market-driven, advertiser-sponsored, and ideologically coherent media system claiming to represent diverse publics and invoking constitutional protection to pre-empt challenge to its controls." (Gerbner, 1989, quoted in Peak and Fisher 1997: 10).

Finally, this section provides an additional framework for explaining the forms of representation detailed here. It is assumed that one cannot make judgements about portrayals without considering the wider context within which they are produced which in this case includes news practices, market forces and the social system. The findings of studies on news production are examined here, both general studies and those with a specific focus on race. This is followed by what authors writing on Islam have referred to in terms of production.

Production studies concentrating on examining media institutional arrangements, organisational routines and professional practices include Cottle, 1995; Dickinson, 1996; Elliot, 1977; Ericson et al, 1987; Tuchman, 1978; Tunstall, 1971a and specifically in relation to race reporting: Cottle, 1991,1993; Critcher et al, 1977; Elliot, 1972; Murdock, 1984. Findings have shown how routine, structured journalistic practices relating to generating media copy to meet deadlines combine with the dominant cultural frameworks of journalists resulting in a limited, constrained and consensual product (Scanlon, 1977).³⁷ Factors involved in this process include the predominance of elite media personnel (Hollingsworth, 1986; Searle, 1987), the news selection/gathering process (Epstein, 1973; Gans, 1979) the continued persistence of news values (Bell, 1991; Epstein, 1973; Galtung and Ruge, 1965) (Troyna, 1981; van Dijk, 1988a)³⁸, the privileging of elite news sources which structures to marginalise alternative voices (Chibnall, 1981; Ericson et al, 1991; Gans, 1979; Goldenberg, 1975; Molotoch and Lester, 1974; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994) (Hall et al, 1978) and the lack of specialist ethnic reporters and understanding as well as processes of integration and constraint on ethnic reporters (Delano and Henningham, 1995; Entman, 1992; Mazingo, 1988). Studies concerned with race on the whole have not explored the wider context of the structures of ownership which underpin the routines detailed but offer a 'collective professional response' (Corner, 1986; Cottle, 1992: 25).³⁹ The constraining factors of this have been found to be material concerns, organisational production routines and cognitive values.

News practices are each inscribed by relations of power, with degrees of this within the hands of different groups within and outside the industry. Ownership is seen to be a key factor in having the power to represent (McLellan, 1973), but some sociologists argue that this can only be seen in the wider social and economic context. If the economic system controls ownership, the interests of the owner will be to support the system and ensure maximum profitability. The need for national media to attract large, well-defined audiences means the owner is most likely to promote a conservative consensual ideology. The

³⁷ Research completed on the role of the journalist's contribution to media distortions has generally found that they have 'interpretative frameworks' by which preconceptions and assumptions inform news reports but are not thought to be wilful (Kushnick, 1970). (See also Dickinson, 1996; Elliot, 1997; Tunstall, 1971, 1996).

³⁸ In these two sets of brackets the first set consists of general studies on news whilst the second; race research.

³⁹ Although the contribution of the political economy approach has revealed some of the commercial pressures stemming from competition.

combination of this and a free market system which has led to the development of conglomerates, interested in profits, has resulted in a media lacking in diversity (Browne et al, 1994; Curran and Seaton, 1992; Dickinson, 1996; Elliot, 1977; Gallagher, 1982; Gerbner, 1989; Hirsch and Gordon, 1975; Murdock, 1982). It is argued then, that it is the economic, political, social and cultural system in place within British society that controls (to different degrees) media output. For the media to develop in a more democratic way would take regulation and subsidy, internal and external reform. This is not something that looks imminent as an increasingly global market, with its growing commercial pressures, encouraging trends which are furthering the 'closure of the communication process' (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). These include tendencies towards monopoly ownership and control in the media; the restriction of entry to the market by virtue of high capital start up costs; the impact of advertising in shaping media output, that of populist commercialism; the growth in revenue goals to the detriment of journalist autonomy and individualism; centralised distribution systems; the manipulation of the political agenda by political parties and powerful lobbies; or on the other hand, little political intervention as politicians try to win over the powerful media moguls, aware of the potential influence their various cultural forms possess (McManus, 1994; Murdock, 1990) and the development of new technologies (Katz, 1992; MacGregor, 1997; Moeller, 1998). These are processes which are leading to an increasing reliance on news agencies and a growth in pack journalism (Gurevitch, 1996; Paterson, 1997).

As a result, news is a conservative phenomenon, a construction based on a consensus which sets limits and maintains pressures. Early studies showed news to be a reproduction of the dominant ideology of leading groups in society (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976). More recently, this theory has developed to see it as a contested space both among the definers of news, within institutions and for the audience but ultimately limited by the hegemonic discourse of the ruling elites (Hall, 1980). These processes in the selection and structuring of news remain hidden from the audience who accept the conventions of news based on a self-evident professional wisdom rather than as definite social and political ways of understanding the world (GUMG, 1976).

Writers on Islam in the media mainly make reference to the non-Muslim journalist working within a specific historical, political and social epoch. For some, this involves the purposeful distortion by governments, media institutions and/or media personnel as an

explanation for images of Islam in the media. For Morris (1989), this 'disinformation' has a psychological function in maintaining a dominant ideology concerning Islam. For Ahmed (1992), the intention is to provoke Muslims so they can be shown to be 'what they really are'.

Said (1981: 47) prefers to see this as a result of the subliminal consciousness of journalists 'who recognise the threat through their national identification'. For Esposito (1992), it is sheer laziness in the practice of journalists who find it easier to rely on a stock of stereotypes rather than, he argues, deal with the real causes of confrontation. This results in readers who are not able to consider these but are provoked to imagine a 'clash of cultures'.

News practices, according to Said (1981: 39), are used to attain credibility, including the use of specific terminology such as 'jihad' which accords texts 'scientific expertise' and achieves the status of a 'tangible recognisable reality'. This type of individualism, however, is grounded in theories which argue that interpretations of Islam are based on vested interests and a will to power which is reflected out to the culture at large. Images of Islam in the news therefore correspond with what prominent sectors take it to be, the purpose being to circulate antipathy, positioning people by news items which are, according to Dahlgren and Chakrapani (1982: 62), evidence of 'an implied commitment to a particular form of global order'.

What we have then is Dahlgren and Chakrapani's (1982: 45) 'particular symbolic universe, a relatively stable and recognisable 'world of (TV) news'. This 'constitutes a communal core of interpretations' (Said, 1981: 43), a consensus definition of what is important in relation to Islam whereby anything else is excluded. These news frameworks or 'facile labels' are seen as radically limiting knowledge of Islam and thus are obstacles to understanding (Esposito, 1992: 163). Each event is seen as characteristic of Islam rather than an event in its own right. And, as we have seen in this chapter, there are many reasons why it may not be in each paper's interest to question the way we see Islam.⁴⁰

However, in an examination of theories of racist ideology, Cohen (1988) warns of the reductionism in the reification of either institutional racism or the individual. To subsume one under the other, he argues, is to ignore the multiple dimensions of its

⁴⁰ For example, the liberal *Guardian* dislikes religion, seeing it as oppressive.

articulation. It is hoped in this chapter, I have been able to articulate the multiple dimensions in theories of ethnocentric discourse in relation to Islam. The aim has been to show how representations cannot be examined away from economic, political, social and cultural factors. I have also shown how the literature has developed progressively to contributing to theories of Islam and its representation in the media. Said's theory of Orientalism has been particularly influential in framing the debate, his arguments can be traced through theories on the historical relationship between Islam and the West, the current political situation through to representations of the Other in a general context.

To reiterate, those factors which I consider most important, combined, which have led to a narrow, limited, negative image of Islam in the media include: the current global, political environment whereby shifts in the world order have resulted in Islam's construction as the enemy of the West; processes of globalisation and fragmentation have led to crises of identity within national states and amongst minority groups, the threat to these have led to a strengthening of boundaries around traditional identities and increased ethnic antagonism. The presentation in the press of a historically conflictual relationship with Islam and the normalising of values which, based on our own history of the Enlightenment, marginalises religion to the private sphere adds a religious dimension to this hostility. Professional practices within the media which operates within a market environment contributes to the conservative, reductive output. Because of the political factors, this reduction is generally consistent in the persistent use of a mode of representation which stresses eternal essences and emphasises a culture clash. The role of this research is to provide a detailed framework of current manifestations of Islam within a British context rather than relying on historical stereotypes for evidence. The role of this chapter has been to provide the context within which British press representations can be understood.

Chapter 2: **Methodologies.**

The two broad central hypotheses in my work are that the representation of British Muslims and Islam in Britain in the mainstream British press is mainly unfavourable and related to specific subjects; and that majority audiences' understandings of British Muslims and Islam are dominated by media themes and discourse. However, those who have regular and direct contact with Muslims are able to formulate independent and differential understandings.

To test these hypotheses, I have used three methodologies including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. I would suggest that it is inappropriate to see qualitative and quantitative analysis as based on clearly distinct and incompatible epistemological paradigms (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996; Bryman, 1988; Smith and Heshusius, 1986). They should be utilised for their specific advantages and disadvantages depending on the goals of the research. This chapter therefore aims to justify and explain the use of the chosen methods for the purposes of the research described above and give a reflexive account of their limitations. It is thought that this will increase the validity of this work and contribute to the development of research methods and quality.

The decision to triangulate methods was based on the belief that to take only one reduces and conceals complexities in the communication process. However, the attempt to include a good deal of the communication process has been taxing in terms of time and effort. In the utilisation of multiple methods, masses of data were generated which inevitably led to data reduction here in the thesis due to both time constraints and the word restriction. In the quantitative analysis, this meant only the basic commands/ variables could be explored. However, the methods complement each other both in encouraging a re-examination of each study's findings and compensating for each other's weaknesses. The use of qualitative methods limited the problems of the quantitative analysis in dealing with those aspects not covered, adding detail and confirming its findings. The quantitative analysis situates the qualitative analysis in the context of the wider framework of reporting. The audience research dealt with the limitations of the content analysis in showing that coverage does matter. However, again, the amount of data collected and analysed was

restricted by the word limit in writing up. This prevented an elaboration of some variables and limited attention to subtle differences in decoding.

Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages in the employment of multiple methods of data collection. It is hoped their utilisation here, along with a transparent account of the process, will result in a higher degree of confidence in the findings.

Quantitative Content Analysis

Aims

To examine portrayals of British Muslims in the daily coverage of the mainstream quality press over a period of three years.

To provide a news framework within which articles about Muslims/ Islam are presented. By 'news framework', I am using the definition employed by Hartmann et al (1974: 145) in their study 'Race as News', as being 'the set of inferences about what it is related to that define an area of subject-matter, and provide the terms in which it is discussed'.

Media Sample

In order to examine representations for a mass audience, I decided to concentrate on national news. I believe that not only are Muslims most likely to be and are more frequently represented in this genre (news), but that it is also considered the most believable and 'true to life' genre by the public. It has also been argued that news reports play an important role in social information processing, particularly about minority groups (van Dijk, 1988b).

I choose the press for analysis which makes me open to criticism that I am ignoring the chief and growing news sources, television and new media. The results of the audience research shows that 'new media' products have some way to go before becoming established sources of news. Although television is obviously extremely important, I chose newspapers because of the wider range of discourses and modes of presentation they express and therefore make available to the public given that they target specific social groups. Whilst it has been argued that this maximises their influence with the audience (Lacey and Longman, 1997), the intention here is to capture a spread of opinion.

Two broadsheet newspapers were selected for several reasons. Firstly for their wider and more detailed coverage of Muslims. It is also argued that the 'quality' form of paper is characterised by the 'objectivist' epistemology of news reflecting an independent,

authoritative and detached stance of journalism (Cottle, 1996).¹ It is therefore likely that the representation of Muslims could be more diverse and fairer than in the tabloid press. It is also likely that the readership of these papers will be highly news orientated and likely to have higher critical skills (the papers are therefore central to 'elite opinion'). Inferences can then be made on the results of this research to tabloid representation(s) and its readership(s).

The Times and *The Guardian* were chosen for their differing political/ideological stances which allows comparisons to be made between their news output on this basis. Neither paper is politically partisan but in terms of ideological orientation, *The Times* is right of centre and *The Guardian* left. I thought that this would provide at least some of the range of ideas circulating on Islam and being disseminated by establishment and elite groups. All daily papers and the Sundays (*The Sunday Times* and *The Observer*) were included in the sample as these contain more features.

The Times is one of the longest established papers in Britain and is known internationally. It is owned by the media mogul Rupert Murdoch's News International who have 35% of national daily paper sales. Its reputation and influence is less today than thirty years ago although circulation has increased from 285,000 in 1965 to 737,351 in 1999 and *The Sunday Times* is now selling approximately 1,397,596 copies compared to its 1,275,000 in 1965 (*The Guardian*, 14/6/99, G2, p. 10; Peak and Fisher, 1997).

The Guardian is controlled by the trustees of The Scott Trust which was set up to ensure its continuance. It is a non-profit making organisation, the revenues made from its *Manchester Evening News* provides financial support to *The Guardian*. A paper which supports liberal causes such as the rights of minorities, it is, however, somewhat less radical now than in the past.² Accounting for only 3% of daily sales, *The Guardian* sold an average of 397,675 dailies in 1999 compared to its 276,000 in 1965, slightly lower than its circulation numbers in the 1980s and early 1990s. *The Observer*, at 399,925 daily sales, has steadily lost its readership since its 1965 circulation of 829,000 (*The Guardian*, 14/6/99, G2, p. 10; Peak and Fisher, 1997). Both papers draw their readership from the higher socio-

¹ Although this is increasingly questionable due to the commercialisation of news. This conception of the broadsheets still circulates amongst newsmakers and the general public, particularly in relation to tabloid journalism.

² Due to a combination of operating in an increasingly commercial market and the shift of the political centre to the right.

economic groups. The CD-ROM (on-line) was used to complete the search, accessibility and resources have also been important in choosing the sample.

These papers' differentially targeted readership allows us to question whether content also differs according to the expected audience? (Nixon and Jones, 1956). According to Osgood (1959), some inferences can be made about the intentions of the message considering the author, although it is recognised that *only* inferences can be made about production and audience from content analysis. Pool (1959: 3) maintained, however, that the (face) meaning of the message cannot be properly analysed without 'its context and circumstances'. The idea that communication is an instrument of influence and the content of messages may be shaped by communicators intending to influence the audience in certain directions is the instrumental model of communication (Holsti, 1969). There has also been considerable research into the role the media serve as agenda setters and social indicators (see for example Beniger, 1978; Brosius & Kepplinger, 1990). Further reliable research is therefore needed to validate such inferences. I have included an audience analysis in this project exactly to avoid making presumptions or false assumptions based on the content analysis. Interviews with journalists, to compare their news values, criterion for reporting Islam with coverage were considered as a way of including an aspect of production within the study. This was not possible due to time limits. Although necessary for thorough communication research, then, studying all aspects of the communication process is rarely possible.

Time Sample

In order to satisfy the demands of both recency and representativeness, I selected *all* articles including the lexical items Muslim(s) or Islam over the three year period, from January 1994 to December 1996 for analysis. The representative nature of the sample ensures validity in testing the hypothesis relating to current newspaper representation. Given the argument that coverage of Islam has had a revival in recent years due to external political events, I thought that this would allow an analysis of trends and patterns in coverage over a period of time. By using this method of sampling, all coverage of Islam and Muslims will be included. This prevents only retrieving certain types of coverage by focusing on particular months etc. which may consist of unusual time periods. From this, I considered that the 'typical' nature of coverage regarding Muslims and Islam could be established (i.e. patterns, core themes, etc.).

The unit of analysis was one complete article. I did not assume, however, that each article has equal weight. Articles were therefore coded by the form in which they appeared, eg. front page news story etc. This allows inferences to be made on the importance of the article. Reviews and obituaries were not included in this analysis due to the separate issues at work in the selection of these articles. However, the amount of articles discarded on this basis were counted in order to provide an idea of the proportion of coverage of Islam that these account for.

The basis of selection for an article; that they included the words Muslim(s) or Islam, i.e. they directly refer to the religion or their people, ensured that only content that explicitly referred to Muslims or Islam was coded. As well as improving reliability, I felt it was important that only articles that could clearly be identified as depicting Muslims should be selected as peoples' interpretation of who Muslims are, if they are not referred to as such, will differ widely. Articles on countries such as Iran where the majority of people are Muslims or articles including people with Muslim names from which ideas about Muslims could be inferred were not, therefore, included.

In the initial stages, I considered applying my coding schedule to all articles on Islam and Muslims (global content) to establish the nature of total coverage. However, due to the amount of data this would have generated, from approximately 9000 articles, and because of the focus in this research, on the representation of British Muslims or Islam in Britain, I decided that only articles on domestic issues would be coded. However, it was necessary to use the method described, locating all the articles on Islam, in order to identify those with a British focus. The number of articles on global Islam also provided a comparative context for the British ones. Once all the articles had been located, every headline was examined in order to separate the international from the domestic stories. If there was any uncertainty, the whole article was checked. This process left only articles on domestic Islam for analysis.

Golding and Elliot (1979: 156) identified the difficulty in defining and separating 'foreign' and 'home' news. For their research on news production and output they established categories of 'home news abroad' and 'foreign news at home' which have been counted as domestic in this research. Due to the problems that can occur, these categories need explicit clarification to ensure reliability. For this research, I detail below the criterion I used for the inclusion of articles as British Islam.

What constitutes British Islam?

For the purpose of this research, this included any articles on British Muslims and Muslims in Britain which involved:

- Muslims and their activities if they take place in Britain. This includes British and international Muslims. This would constitute 'foreign news at home'.
- British Muslims' activities abroad ('home news abroad').
- Comments by British non-Muslims on Muslims or Islam in Britain, including important figures such as the Royal Family and religious figures.
- Where an event including British Muslims originated in Britain but is being discussed elsewhere, for example, stories on Salman Rushdie in association with Iran.

The following were excluded:

- General stories about Islamic beliefs that are not geographically located.
- Stories where reference is made to Islam but the article as a whole is concerned with a separate subject.
- Stories about British non-Muslims caught up in situations abroad (involving non-British Muslims) such as wars, as hostages etc.
- Articles where the main actor is a British politician commenting on (non-British) Muslim activities abroad, foreign policy etc.

Articles that fit into the first two criterion of this section were, however, counted and compared to other articles on Islam.

Mode of analysis: Quantification

A formal coding instrument was implemented, a technique that is standard for the quantification of news content. Before designing the coding schedule, it was necessary to familiarise myself with the coverage in order to employ appropriate categories. This was followed by a pilot study of five months coverage to ensure categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. This included January and February 1994, and March to May 1996.

Due to the size of sample, in order to keep the project manageable, a broad focus was taken, testing for only a few variables. Further depth is provided by the qualitative analysis. The following variables were analysed: where the news occurred (in what paper), when it occurred, where it occurred in the paper and in what format, where the action took place, what the news was about, and who is portrayed as saying what. The main actor was

included to establish the allocation of roles in the media and therefore the social representation of power relationships in society. The gender and faith of the principal actor was, therefore, also considered important. The full coding schedule is attached (see Appendix a). I employed coding instructions to ensure reliability (see Appendix b).

In the initial stages, I considered measuring for bias in terms of coding for tone. However, I decided that this would be extremely subjective and that by using the categories described above, a clear picture of the type of coverage of British Islam could be gained. An index of frequency was used as a measure of importance, attention and emphasis. This emphasis also identified patterns of absence.

The main focus for analysis was news content; the prominent topics of news items about British Muslims. As well as coding for the main topic of coverage, a further prominent sub-topic was coded plus two references made to other related subjects. This seemed important to discover not just what articles are about but what other themes are referred to in the treatment of particular topics. Which kind of themes occur more as topics or subtopics? This element of the research may make it less reliable but more valid. By focusing on what the material is about, the kind of situations and events by which Muslims are associated with in the press, and are made available within the public domain, can be established (as with Hartmann et al, 1974).

Whilst most of the analysis and comparisons completed were in relation to internal indicators, it was also possible to compare patterns of coverage to external indicators such as The Bradford Riots. There are no regulations regarding the representation of religion in the press so an external comparison, on this basis of whether these requirements have been met, cannot be completed.

The results were inputted and analysed on computer using the SPSS programme (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This allowed more complex comparisons to be made with greater ease, asking questions across variables such as; is there a connection between the format of an article and topic? These types of questions allows the sort of material and patterns of coverage to be established, providing an overall picture of British Islam, which has been made publicly available in recent years.

Limitations of the method

The main problem found with the quantitative analysis was with the categories of analysis I chose for the coding schedule and their definitions (refer to Appendix a & b).

Although my efforts to ensure familiarity with the material and test the coding instrument ensured appropriate categories were selected, a different classification scheme would have resulted in more effective/ productive findings. For example, organising the categories chosen into events and causes may have been more revealing in exposing patterns of representation. My categories included a mixture of events, themes, causes, and effects under the topic of analysis.

I would also rethink the different categories selected as topics and references. Although some of these differences were justified in that these subjects were unlikely to appear in another form, including all categories as both topics and references would have allowed this theory to be verified. It also made overall comparison of those categories of coverage difficult. Additionally, between topics and references, I gave some of the same categories different names. For example, 'Fundamentalism' was chosen as the topic category (01) and 'political activism' as a reference (22), despite their identical meanings. Although I was aware of their meanings and coded consistently, including both in both sections and awarding them different meanings would have been more sensible and provided more clarity for the reader. This may also cause problems with replication, although coding instructions are included. If the project were now reproduced, the codes would need updating. For example, including 'Nation of Islam' solely as a reference was justifiable at the time but in 1998 they have become more visible and also appear as a main topic.

My initial inexperience resulted in the expenditure of too much time on a first analysis which proved to be generally unproductive. This time could have been better spent exploring more interesting aspects of the data such as differences between the papers. I would also have liked to include tabloids in the analysis but, at the time, none were available on CD-ROM (*The Mail* is now accessible from 1997). The quantity of material I wished to cover prevented collecting this manually.

Despite the ambiguity with some of the categories, the reliability of the study is proved by the results, in the consistency of appropriate findings. In every case, the results fit logically together. An example of this is in the occurrence of actors with particular topics (see Table 2.1).

In addition to this, gaps in my analysis would have been strengthened by: introducing a diachronic element, taking earlier coverage (1980s) to examine how events have changed over time, taking account of political factors; and by examining the marginal

topics/stories covered (rather than most frequently occurring stories) to find out how these topics fit into the framework.

Table 2.1: Actors appearing in main topics: illustrating the reliability of findings.

TOPIC	ACTOR	FREQ- UEN- CY	% of articles on topic.	% of articles with actor
Education	Educationalist	65	50.8	86.7
Prince Charles	Royalty	34	82.9	70.8
Politics	Political Figure	33	61.1	45.8
Criminal Activity	Community members	28	65.1	16.2
Relationships	Media figures	27	45	38
Relationships	Community Members	21	35	12.1
Islamic Fundamentalism	Committees/ Groups	19	33.3	28.8
Christianity	Religious Figure	16	57.1	25.8
Islamic Fundamentalism	Political Activist	15	26.3	41.7
Media	Media Industry	14	34.1	19.7
Sport	Media Figure	13	68.4	18.3
Rushdie	Media Industry	12	57.1	16.9

Qualitative Content Analysis

Aims

To provide depth and expand on the findings of the quantitative content analysis.

To enable a comparative examination of competing and contradicting press discourses.

Sampling decisions

At this point in the research, I decided to expand the analysis to include two tabloid papers to allow a comparison with broadsheet coverage. By incorporating a broader range of the British press, this encompasses a wider selection of the type of information being made available to the public regarding Islam, especially given the readership of the tabloids. *The Mail* and *The Sun* were chosen as they represent the most popular and influential papers amongst the tabloids (Lacey and Longman, 1997). Both papers express conservative ideologies. *The Mail* is owned by the Daily Mail and General Trust, part of the Northcliffe Newspapers Groups which is the second largest regional paper owner. It currently sells 2,331,296 papers daily, and a similar amount on a Sunday, approximately 12% of the

market. *The Sun*, as *The Times*, is part of News International. It has the highest daily sales in the UK at 3,738,769 (*The Guardian*, 14/6/99, G2, p. 10; Peak and Fisher, 1997).

The year following on from the quantitative analysis, 1997, was selected to again allow comparison with previous years and contribute additional depth to the developing news framework. Having considered time sampling of a couple of months, I decided that the articles used for analysis would be informed by the quantitative content analysis so that the most topical stories would be chosen for their consistent media interest (the same stories would be used from all papers). This, again, aimed to avoid random sampling which can result in the selection of a month where there is little reporting or much coverage revolving around one incident, thus providing more meaningful data. As Altheide (1987) found, by taking a purely random approach to sampling, important thematic patterns can be lost.

Having completed an initial exploration into the five most frequently occurring topics found by the quantitative analysis, as they occurred in 1997, two problems occurred. The first being the initial non appearance of some of the topics (and the marriage of topics and subtopics) in this year, such as education (and religious studies). This was also a reflection of the disparity in news values between the tabloids and broadsheets, the topics chosen reflecting the values of the broadsheets, being informed by the quantitative analysis. This was especially a problem for coverage in *The Sun*. The other difficulty being the number of articles generated by other topics such as the Sarwar Affair (which completely overshadowed other stories).

Despite this, I still felt it was beneficial to retain these topics in order to be able to say something about the cohesivity of discourse on Islam in a variety of events. Focusing on one or two would not allow for comparison based on other factors in reporting such as political bias. These problems were overcome both by reverting to 1996 for articles on education (although this was only possible with the broadsheets due to the availability of electronic searching) and by completing a separate analysis of *The Sun's* coverage alongside the other topics. Although the original plans had to be compromised to some extent, I felt the resulting methodology would provide a comprehensive and representative sample of the four papers.

The selection of specific stories within a topic was based on their development within the year. Those that occurred most often and could be identified as continuing stories took prominence, to illustrate how they developed, the way the problems were

conceptualised and the solutions preferred along with resolution and closure.³ Despite the number of articles generated, all items which ran on a story were selected. Removing just one of the articles from analysis can have an impact on the overall meaning as items often follow on or draw on each other in subsequent reports. Keeping reports in the context of ongoing coverage also avoids the sole selection of articles that support the hypothesis. Most of the events selected did not reach a final conclusion in 1997 and it was therefore necessary to continue monitoring the papers for updates. This was also time consuming and illustrates the difficulty in trying to fix meaning. An additional factor in selecting stories was the extent to which the story solely involved British Muslims (in their entirety). Many articles were not solely about British Muslims, for example, a speech by the Conservative MP, Norman Tebbit, at the Conservative conference, October 1997, on multiculturalism featured British Muslims. It was felt that articles should be as far as possible wholly about British Muslims for this stage of the research. The stories and associated topics are detailed in Chapter 4.

In this part of the project, I also took advantage of the greater flexibility of qualitative techniques, exploring the patterns in the text as they emerged, rather than being confined by predefined categories (although this process was somewhat guided by both theory and the quantitative findings) (Hansen, 1995).

Approach

In analysing the texts, it was necessary to use an ideological approach in order to gain an idea of the 'preferred meanings' present. Although I recognise that the meaning of a text cannot be fully understood without the varying interpretations of the audience, research shows that texts do have an ideological stance reflecting particular 'myths, meanings and values of society' (Hindmarsh, 1996). I chose a discursive approach for its incorporation and development of both the ideological/ structuralist approaches and genre analysis.

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis stems from work of French theorist Foucault, who conceptualised discourse as the production of knowledge through language that has a will to power.⁴ According to Foucault (1980: 201), power is exercised over those who are

³ For example, I decided to use the Sarah Cook story for the topic 'relationships' for this reason, despite its foreign element, as most articles on British Muslims represent solitary events. The only other recurring story on the relationships of British Muslims in this year was that of Dodi Fayed and Princess Diana who do not constitute average citizens and in which the categorisation of Dodi as a Muslim was inconsistent.

⁴ Its meaning is also subject to struggle within sociolinguistics, representing two traditions, that which is described here (social theory) and that which is described in the audience section (p. 308) which is grounded in social psychology.

'known' through discourse.⁵ Those who produce discourse, therefore, have the power to enforce its validity so it effectively becomes a 'regime of truth' (Hall, 1992a: 295).

The shift from ideological to discourse-based explanations of ethnic tension (Goldberg, 1993; van Dijk, 1983; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) are based on a definition of ideology which makes a distinction between true statements about the world (science) and false statements (ideology). Foucault argued that statements are rarely simply true or false as facts can be construed in different ways (through language). Rather, discourse acknowledges the ideological dimension in all statements. Competing discourses therefore represent a contestation over power where the outcome of struggle, according to Hall (1992a), decides the 'truth' (based on real effects). Ideology cannot, however, be dismissed. If defined, as with Sapsford and Abbott (1996: 332), as 'a coherent set of propositions about what people and /or social institutions are like and how they ought to be- generally presented to one group of people that certain behaviours are in their own interests and concealing the fact they are more so in the interests of another, more powerful group', it can be usefully incorporated into Foucault's notion of discourse as an expression of ideology, 'a framework within which ideas are formulated' (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 332).

The media then, contributes to 'discourse environments' (van Dijk, 1991), having the authority, based on institutional power (and structured by unequal sets of social relations), to reproduce 'moral norms', theoretical 'explanations' and 'techniques of (social) control' (the three aspects of social regulation) (Foucault, 1982 in Jupp, 1996: 307). This means that through the discursive practices of newspapers, the norms, values and interests of dominant groups, which legitimate a certain conceptualisation of an event, its social meaning and a preferred solution, are reproduced, confirmed and diffused (van Dijk, 1988b: 110). Its power then, lies in its contribution to the maintenance of social relations and discriminatory practices.

Discourse analysis has the advantage of taking into account and revealing social processes in its incorporation of all aspects of communication: a text's author, its authority, its audience, and its objective (Worrall, 1990: 8). It therefore allows the researcher, through a process of deconstruction, to reveal the prevailing knowledge among sets of people held about a set of people at a particular historical and political conjuncture, and provide an

⁵ Power, as defined by Fowler (1991: 105), is 'an asymmetrical relationship between people such as that one person has the ascribed authority to control the others' actions and liberties and not vice versa'.

alternative reading. However, official discourse is one amongst a 'multiplicity of interacting discourses' (Jupp, 1996: 311), the state being only one institution involved in the production of knowledge. In addition then, an examination of the variance between papers in the placement and construction of subjects into the public domain allows for the identification of the social priorities of differing groups.

I have chosen to utilise a classical qualitative method of 'content analysis' refined by a particular method of discourse analysis which draws on aspects of critical linguistics based on the functional linguistics of Halliday (1976 in Fowler, 1991) and 'structures of news discourse' (van Dijk, 1983, 1988b, 1991). The theoretical basis for these procedures maintains that the expression of ideology, regarding actors and social processes, is contained within semantic macrostructures including stylistic variation (lexical choices, categorisation, syntactic structures, coherence relations) and rhetorical operations.⁶ Although these choices may sometimes be arbitrary, they often have a functionality based on political, economic and social factors that newspapers conventions reflect. As speech acts, newspaper discourses have communicative goals of assertion, accusation or recommendation. According to Fowler (1991: 82), 'Vocabulary is the representation of the world for a culture, the world according to the ideological needs of a culture'. The decision therefore, to use one word over another or one syntactical arrangement over another has ideological significance. By revealing a specific ideational language structure, the role a paper has in constructing difference, through its representational practices, can be identified.

Aspects of the linguistic structure which are said to signify beliefs and values were also examined in headlines. Headlines are considered to be important in expressing the 'main' topic or macroproposition of the text and in defining the events for the reader (and as such it is these that are most likely to be recalled and retrieved in cognitive processing, van Dijk, 1988a & b, 1991). Other linguistic features used to extract meaning include; transitivity, as a basis for identifying the attribution of agency and power relations expressed in the syntactic structure of sentences and headlines (Fowler, 1991; Trew, 1979); ideologically based, structural transformations of articles whereby events are reformulated through the detraction, selection and abstraction of meaning; and group categorisation whereby attributes applied to it through discourse gain conceptual solidity and become

⁶ See Appendix c for glossary of methodological terms.

‘common sense’ (Fowler, 1991: 93). These tacit assumptions and ‘common knowledge’ can therefore be made explicit.

The application of these procedures cannot provide us with consistent meanings but have their significance in context (Fowler, 1991: 99). Through contextualisation, one takes account of the socio-cultural situation through which discourse takes place, recognising the discourse as a form of social practice (van Dijk, 1983, 1991). Some of these contextual conditions have been described (p. 43). In Chapter 4 this knowledge is employed to make sense of textual structures. Discourse analysis therefore provides us with the interpretative frameworks of newspapers based on their specific description of the world (within which events can be read). Operating at the level of cultural formation, discourse analysis is seen as effective in revealing the strategies used by papers to reproduce and retain a hegemony of ideas regarding British Islam.

The element of subjectivity increases with qualitative work. Using a diversity of approaches makes it more problematic in terms of reliability. The researcher’s interpretation of the article is only one interpretation of the meaning contained in a text and is based on already presupposed cognitive information and knowledge (van Dijk, 1983).⁷ However, rather than attend to ‘objectivity’, I wanted to ensure the methods were as ‘systematic’ (Holsti, 1969) and ‘replicable’ (Krippendorff, 1981) as possible. These tools of analysis provide at least some conventions for explicating methods, and makes replication a possibility.

Whilst originally intending to use NUD.IST (Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Search and Theorising), a computer programme which assists with qualitative data analysis, I felt the increase in workload would not be worthwhile in terms of outcomes (due to the time needed to input data). On reflection, having used the programme for the processing of the audience data, (p. 71), I feel it would have been useful even if just to compare quantitative aspects of the texts.

One of the main criticisms of content analysis is that it does not take account of theories which argue that there is no ‘true’ meaning of texts outside specific contexts (Hodder, 1994; Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1994). Here context means ‘what the reader brings to the text’ (Levinson, 1983). In the utilisation of various methods here, each deals

⁷ According to Caldwell (1977), this is particularly salient and compounded by the ‘historical baggage’ of the non-Asian student of the Orient.

with the inadequacies of the others. The use of focus groups in this research project aims to both validate the findings of the content analysis (in terms of the preferred meanings in texts) and provide the 'contexts' within which the text has meaning.

Limitations of the method

One of the main problems with this stage of the research was in the collection and selection of data. It took significantly longer than expected to locate and gather the articles necessary for analysis, particularly in the tabloids as there are no electronic searching mechanisms available. Having initially gathered what I thought to be the total number of articles on a story, additional articles would be identified, along with new reports appearing as the story developed. This required keeping conclusions tentative during the course of completing this PhD.

The amount of material generated by the selection of five topics far exceeded expectations. Whilst this contributed to providing a comprehensive picture of the reporting of British Islam in these papers, it created a difficulty in managing the project both within the time and word limits. The complexity of media discourse combined with the number of articles analysed meant that the presentation of data has been greatly reduced and simplified for it to remain readable. Fewer articles would have allowed for a finer description of data. Of course, the complexities and ambivalences of representation as a practice which makes the practice of interpretation questionable in trying to extract and fix 'preferred meanings' is always a problem with qualitative content analysis. This becomes all the more complicated when it involves the representation of the Other. However, it is thought that, through the systematic application of specific linguistic procedures, this can to some extent be controlled and that these results are generally illustrative of available discourses.

Audience Research

Aims

To examine the variety of socio-cultural factors important in the decoding of mediated information about Muslims, paying particular attention to the variable of cultural proximity in interpreting and understanding the texts, that is knowledge, experiences and familiarity with Muslims and Islam.

History

The development of audience research with ethnic minority groups reflects broader trends within media theory but which can be considered as mainly qualitative.⁸ These research traditions can generally be grouped as follows; that which has aimed to discover how the media *influences* attitudes and perceptions of racial groups both amongst these groups and in the wider society (Bagley, 1973; Halloran and Bhatt, 1992; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; Hartmann et al, 1974; Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Ross, 1992; Troyna, 1981; van Dijk, 1991); that which has examined the *uses and gratifications* of the media for particular ethnic groups, where most audience research is located (Gillespie, 1989; Gilmore, 1996; Gunter and Viney, 1993; Halloran et al, 1995; Jones and Dungey, 1983; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1995) and *reception analysis*, a relatively young and under used tradition, examining the variety of interpretations of media texts, suggesting readers are differentiated, discerning and actively involved in the construction of meaning (Campbell, 1995; Dent, 1992; Jhally and Lewis, 1992; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Lull, 1988b; Morley, 1980; Sharma, 1990; Silverman and Yuval-Davis, 1998).

The findings of these projects are fairly homogeneous and indicate:⁹ (those corroborated by my research findings are highlighted)

- *the desire for the media to reflect the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of minority groups,*
- *that there exists a strong desire to preserve one's culture and pass this down to future generations,*
- *that representation is considered predominantly negative and compounds attitudes and stereotypes regarding minorities in the wider society,*
- that minority groups should not have to bear the 'burden of representation' and always and only represent minority issues,
- *individual groups are interested in possible negative representations of their own collective identities, generally holding the belief that this is more negative than for other groups,*

⁸ Excluding research carried out by broadcasting bodies which has been mainly quantitative.

⁹ Concentrating on the studies completed with ethnic minorities. Those studies examining the influence of the media on majority views have found that (limited) media themes dominate majority understandings of minority ethnic groups but that the media has a role in supporting and maintaining views rather than affecting attitude change.

- *cross-cultural differences exist in both uses and understandings of texts through negotiation based on a number of situational factors,*

- *those variables important in the use and attitudes to and understandings of media products are often similar to the mainstream audience. These include age, language ability, gender, class, religious, familial and cultural norms,*

- *minorities are significant media users but that local and other media is proving to be more popular and provides a better service to minority groups,*

- *there should be increased involvement and recruitment of minorities in media organisations so they can define their own cultural context,*

- *and improvements need to be made in terms of representation and provision but it is debatable as to which is the best way of dealing with this, more integration or separate provision.*

Approach

This part of the research is based on the assumption that whilst there may be a 'preferred reading' embedded in a text, i.e. a dominant message, that the reading of the message will depend on a number of variables.¹⁰ Reception analysis is therefore the most appropriate approach for this purpose.

Reception analysis

Reception analysis, it is argued, emerged in a climate of dissatisfaction with 1970s structuralist conceptions of the all-powerful media in media research as new ideas regarding the active audience took precedence. The theory shifts away from the traditional behaviourist 'effects' model in audience studies to argue that meaning is produced in the meeting and interaction of text and audience. It is largely based on the landmark texts and work of Stuart Hall (1980) and David Morley (1980) who argued that audiences are positioned by dominant meanings, the 'preferred meaning' of a text, but are able to oppose or negotiate with these on the basis of socio-cultural factors. According to Hall's semiotic model of encoding/ decoding, if different moments in the communication chain where encoding and decoding take place are asymmetrical, a 'lack of equivalence' ensues, resulting in differential understandings of the text. Hence, the focus has concentrated on

¹⁰ By 'reading', I mean 'the capacity to identify and decode a number of signs' and 'to put them into a creative relation between themselves and with other signs' (Hall quoting Terni, 1980: 135). I agree with Hall that this capacity is socially constructed rather than, as Terni suggested, subjective. The process of decoding includes comprehension of and/or response to the text at the level of denotative, connotative and signified meaning (Corner, 1991).

what audiences bring to texts, their 'interpretative frameworks', rather than what the media does to the audience. These ideas are based on a whole tradition of audience research which found situational factors important in meaning production (Cantril, 1947; Herzog, 1944; Hodge and Tripp, 1986; Schramm et al, 1960) but has become the dominant model for understanding audiences in the current era.¹¹ However debate continues to abound over the level of openness or closure of texts. Fiske (1986) has been particularly influential in his work on television which suggests that texts are polysemic, open to variant readings. We are therefore left with 'two equally unsatisfactory positions' (Morley, 1981: 5).¹²

I will be drawing on the encoding/decoding model of Hall (1980) for its conception of 'structured polysemy', that 'all meanings do not exist equally in the message, it has been structured in dominance' (Morley, 1980: 10). The model has been criticised for its limited range and 'overtly political' decoding positions; the 'premature closure of the text' with its 'preferred reading' (Cruz and Lewis, 1994; Wren-Lewis, 1983: 187), and its lack of context. Morley himself recognised these limitations in the postscript to his *Nationwide* study (1981). However, I consider it a useful starting point from which a range of variant interpretations can be examined. Taking account of some of these criticisms in the implementation of the research I, however, occupy the position that texts, as discursive formations embedded within the social structure, limit our understanding and knowledge of the social world. Whilst ideology does then attempt to fix meaning in order to maintain hegemony, meaning is never finally fixed, even after the meeting of text and audience.

This societal model will be supported by cognitive models drawn from social-psychology for a richer analysis (Corner, 1991; Höijer, 1998; van Dijk, 1988b). Cognitive theory contends that meaning is generated in the interaction between external life/social activity and mental life/cognitive activity (Höijer, 1998: 169). This approach is seen as necessary in finding out how the audience decode media messages. In this case, the model is deployed to examine people's understanding, knowledge or formulations of British Muslims; the variation in meanings (discourse), comparing these to press discourse, and possible reasons for variant readings based on specific identifications, the 'determinations of

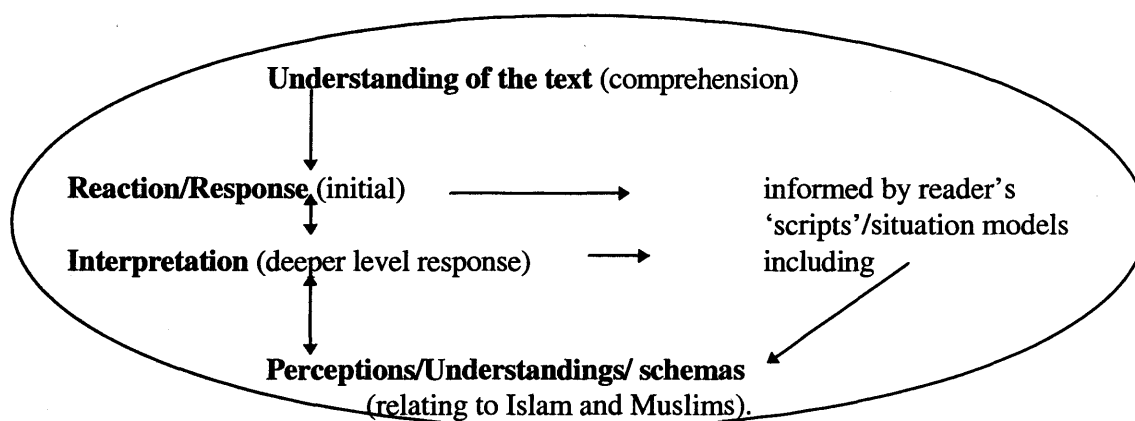
¹¹ Whilst most of these studies have concentrated on television, much of their findings can be appropriated for work with written texts (Corner et al, 1990; Dahlgren, 1988; Jensen, 1986; Lewis, 1985; Miller, 1994; Richardson and Corner, 1986).

¹² Reception analysis has since incorporated an ethnographic element, placing particular importance of the study of the audience in context, examining the consumption of media within the time-space structuration of everyday life (Ang, 1985; Gillespie, 1989; Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1987).

meaning'. The usefulness of the model in its avocation of textual analysis allows the researcher to examine the extent to which these determinants are inscribed within or external to the text, and which variables are important to our understanding of Muslims, paying particular attention, in this case, to cultural proximity on which the hypothesis is based.

A note of caution: in many studies substitute terms for 'interpretations' have been used interchangeably with little attempt to differentiate between them or explicitly define their meanings. What is the difference between a response and a reaction for example? Is there any? As Corner et al (1990) have argued, two people can comprehend a text in the same way but react to it differently. This is an issue which cannot be explored in depth here but is necessary to be aware of. Figure 2.1 shows how these terms have been applied in this analysis.

Figure 2.1: The Process of **Decoding/ Reading** (takes place on different levels):



Mode of analysis: Focus groups

It is considered that direct experience (of Muslims) will be the most powerful factor in interpreting newspaper messages (about Muslims). Such research objectives necessitate the use of in-depth work. Focus groups were therefore selected as an appropriate method for two main reasons: firstly, due to the importance of examining the social context of public understandings, focus group are a socially orientated research procedure. The method therefore has theoretical significance. Secondly, that their flexible and semi-structured nature allows the researcher to probe. These will now be examined in more detail:

1) Focus groups are considered a particularly useful method of research when the aim is to examine participants' meanings and ways of understanding. Contemporary theory regarding the audience suggests that audiences actively negotiate and construct meanings through social interaction (Livingstone, 1990). As Lunt (1996: 85) argues, the audience should not be seen as 'an aggregate of atomised opinions and attitudes, but as individuals located in concrete social groups who construct meaningful social action partly through the discursive interrogation of texts'. In this context, I found it most appropriate to use pre-existing or 'naturally occurring' groups within which participants operate, who may be turned to for information and advice and used to produce and reproduce meanings in their every day lives (Kitzinger, 1994, 1995). According to Middleton and Edwards (1990) these are people with which one may normally discuss topical subjects and are thus major sites of 'collective remembering'. Focus groups can be seen, to some extent, as a 'simulation' of the routines or 'communicative contexts' and 'natural social networks' by which meaning is constructed through everyday talk (Lunt, 1996: 85, supported by Hedges, 1985; Kitzinger, 1991, 1994, 1995; Vaughn et al, 1996). This was seen as particularly significant to Liebes and Katz (1990: 23), in their research on ethnic groups and television, who were interested in examining 'clusters of community members who are in close contact and among whom television programs are likely to be discussed'. These groups can relate each others comments to previous incidents and events in their shared daily lives, giving insights into the construction of meaning, what Kitzinger (1994: 300) calls 'fragments of interactions' which approximate to 'naturally occurring' data. I therefore anticipated that by examining the way the groups respond to the text and negotiate their ideas within their pre-existing groups, some understanding of the operation of group social processes within a cultural context that lead to attitude and opinion formation would be gained. According to Liebes and Katz (1990: 28), focus groups are the 'key to understanding the mediating process via which a program such as this (*Dallas*) enters into the culture'. As the aim here was to examine how media texts contribute to understandings of Muslims within British culture, I considered pre-existing groups as the best possible method to use.

The social context of focus groups was also considered important in gauging the language and definitions the groups use themselves rather than that offered by the researcher. This can offer a comparative insight into the groups' norms and values. Kitzinger (1995) suggests that this is particularly useful when cultural variables are

involved, allowing the researcher to identify common or shared knowledge and frameworks of understanding that participants may use with each other but alone the researcher would not have access to. However, it is equally important in exposing dominant cultural values and narratives about racism and ethnicity. Hedges (1985) draws attention to the importance of the group situation in forcing the individual to examine his relations to others. This is of particular importance in this research which attempts to examine perceptions of the Other.

The focus group, therefore, emphasises the social nature and processes of communication and the polysemic and context-dependent nature of meaning and does not reduce audience research to the study of the individual. The focus group can reveal the ways in which various discourses rooted in particular contexts and given experiences are brought to bear on interpretations and what Billig (1987) calls the 'dilemmatic nature of everyday arguments'. This research therefore sees the group dynamic as having a positive role rather than being solely problematic to the research design. However, one cannot be naively optimistic and should be aware of possible issues in order to take account of them in analysis. I recognise that focus groups as 'simulations' are not complete and naturalistic replications of every day life and do not assume that the talk would have occurred if the group had not been convened for its purpose (Burgess et al, 1991; Kitzinger 1994). A focus group is an artificial, simplified context and this context and the knowledge of the purpose (research) will have some effect on the participants.

Dealing with some of the limitations of the context included obtaining written responses to gauge the initial interpretations of (socially-situated) individuals. This recognises that the decoding of newspaper texts in every day life initially takes place on an individual level. This enabled an examination of the processes by which the participants refined and confirmed their understandings through interaction with others. It offered respondents an opportunity to communicate with the researcher, recording private comments they did not feel comfortable exposing to a group or orally to the researcher, given the power relations involved.

Given that meanings are not fixed but continually negotiated as people come into contact with more information and discussion, I planned to re-convene the groups, following initial meetings, thus tracing the decoders path through 'the conditions in which actual opinions are formed, held and modified' (Morley, 1980: 34).

I also anticipated problems regarding the restraining effects of the group situation. There is a risk that social pressures will condition responses in an artificial way. Conforming to the group norm can be a particular problem with teenagers (Smith, 1977) and some minority groups where there is a high expectation of conformity amongst peers. Subjects such as racial issues where there is significant approval/public consensus for a particular discourse (anti-racism) often constrains people in exposing private views. Using pre-existing groups enables participants to offer each other mutual support in expressing feelings which deviate from mainstream culture, a 'safety in numbers' effect, particularly important for marginal groups. However, if it is a subject not usually discussed and one individual deviates from the group norm, this can leave them in an awkward position once the research has finished, having revealed their opinions.

To some extent, however, these social pressures are realistic and would be present in a more naturalistic setting. It is evident though, that people shift their public image and opinions according to the group they are with, so the choice of group and setting imposes a particular environment on the participants who may not want to reveal their honest opinions within it (if they are able to articulate what these are). Knowing what is and is not expressed in the group setting is important to the findings, allowing an exploration of the role of social pressures in the construction and communication of knowledge.

It is wrong, however, to consider groups as more inhibiting than other situations such as interviews. Sometimes groups can facilitate the discussion of taboo subjects as less inhibited members may break the ice or one person's revelation of 'discrediting' information encourages others to disclose (Kitzinger, 1994, 1995). A further advantage is proposed by Schoenfeld (1988) who suggests that because the participants are not required to speak every time, responses may be more genuine, substantially increasing their validity.

It may not be possible to eliminate these group pressures but it is hoped that the constraining effects can be minimised by skilled moderation. By examining the literature and therefore being aware of the constraints, I was able to take them into account during analysis. According to Altheide and Johnson (1994), it is accounting for the interactions among context, researcher, methods, setting and actor that validates the findings in qualitative research. It was for this reason that I applied 'reflexive indexing', for evidence of group/research effect (Mason, 1996: 116) to the data (the results of which are shown in Chapter 5, p. 308).

2) The focus group is considered a valuable tool for generating rich and purposeful data due to the capacity for the researcher to probe. In focus groups, answers and disagreements can be explored and un-packed 'in situ' with the research participants. Any misunderstandings can therefore be clarified. The group situation allows the researcher to observe how the participants theorise their point of view in relation to other perspectives. Participants are required to explain the reasoning behind their thinking rather than just accepting their answer as the right one.

Focus groups should elicit more depth and dimension due to the stimulating nature of interaction which encourages people to delve more deeply into their own perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. The dynamic environment should therefore lead to richer data through what Vaughn et al call the 'loosening effect' (1996: 19).

Editing groups are now often offered as a more effective way of eliciting audience meanings (Kitzinger, 1991; MacGregor and Morrison, 1995; Miller, 1994; Philo, 1991). These were rejected as a method for two reasons. That the quality of the pictures analysed in the qualitative textual research would not provide enough clues for the groups to work on and that the groups may lack the knowledge to be able to construct a story in some cases, e.g. the Mohammed Sarwar corruption scandal.

In describing the sampling decisions of this stage of the research, I will firstly provide an account of the initial plan and the reasoning behind it and then report any revisions to this based on practicalities.

Composition of the group

The participants were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. I planned for six focus groups (excluding the pilot study). This would include two groups of different participants in each category, the comparative aspect being familiarity with Muslims. It was anticipated that in this context, this would be the variable of most importance given the focus of the articles. The three groups consisted of:

Muslims,

Non-Muslims who mix frequently with Muslims,

Non-Muslims who have no frequent contact with Muslims.

An initial worry was the problematic nature of identifying those variables as the crucial determinants of meaning in this instance. How, for example, if Bangladeshi Muslims were selected, would I be able to distinguish between cultural and religious identifications as the significant variables? It was hoped that the crucial identifier in the text (focusing on Muslims) would result in religious identification being strongest in this case. In actual fact, this soon became transparent as the Muslims quickly articulated their identifications.

I planned to include approximately seven students in each group to ensure maximum participation but a range of voices. This would result in 14 people in each category and a total of 42 participants.

Recruitment

The respondents were recruited through two local sixth form colleges (the Muslims and the Contact group from the same environment). A letter was sent to the Principal requesting permission. Teachers were contacted who were willing to participate in the study and groups identified who would fit the sampling framework of the research. The teachers were not present when the groups took place for fear of inhibiting responses. Locating the Muslim group was the most difficult, particularly the males. For them, a snowballing sampling technique was used whereby interested participants assisted in finding other people within their own networks (Preston et al, 1995). This may have increased their homogeneity to some extent.

The groups were asked to participate on the basis that the research was about finding out opinions and reactions to newspaper articles. I thought that to reveal the full research purpose would affect the results, although this became somewhat clearer to the participants, particularly to the Muslim groups, when the texts were exposed and discussion commenced.

I intended to construct as homogeneous groups as was feasible (although this is never entirely possible), firstly to limit the number of variables at play (and focus on cultural proximity) and secondly to construct an atmosphere where individuals felt happy disclosing their opinions, i.e. with like-minded people. I felt that in this situation the group would be easier to conduct, developing confidence quickly (this was also helped by the familiarity the participants had with each other). This can lead to consensus building within the group, what Paulis (1989) calls the 'false consensus effect' and it is important that this is

challenged.¹³ By challenging the consensus view, not only are new avenues of discussion opened up but the researcher is able to experience how strongly beliefs are held.

The homogeneity of the group was, in reality, affected by the need to recruit on a volunteer basis. Whilst every attempt was made to control the variables in planning for recruitment, access was on the basis of consent.

Age and Locality

To try and eliminate and control some of the variables, one age group was selected, of the same level of education: sixth form pupils in Leicester (aged 16-18). Youth groups were chosen because of recent arguments surrounding the revival of religious identities and political activism in young Muslims, due to their increasing alienation (see Chapter 5, Conclusion, for a full discussion of this). I also considered that these young people are the adults of tomorrow, the future for British Muslims.¹⁴ Their views are therefore the most relevant for anticipating future attitudes to and the place of these groups in society. They are also considered to be going through a transitional stage where they are becoming more aware of and interested in political issues so more able to comment. Fiske (1994) also suggests that this age group are increasingly becoming an important target audience for marketing as they begin to form newspaper reading habits.

The nature of qualitative research with its small scale sampling, the emphasis on depth rather than representativeness, meant that the study could only take place with a limited number of respondents. The aim was therefore to research the collective and comparative nature of local experiences (the 'local-public domain', Burgess et al, 1991) which cannot be considered as representative of the national context. It is important then to provide details of this local context.

Muslims in Leicester: There is no information currently available about the numbers of Muslims living in Leicester as statistics are based on ethnic categories compiled from the last Census, 1991. Leicester ranked fifth in terms of absolute numbers of ethnic minorities of all local authorities in 1991. It had the second (to Birmingham) highest number of Asians and the most Indians of any local authority in the UK. It was, however, only 35th for black citizens. The Asian population in Leicester then accounted for 23.7% of its total population (270,493). Seventy-eight per cent of Asians were Indian (60,297). In 1991, there were

¹³ Although the consensus can sometimes be attributed to the homogeneity of the groups.

¹⁴ It is estimated that around 70% of British Muslims are under the age of 25 (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).

2,644 Pakistanis and 1,053 Bangladeshis, a total of 3697, 1.4% of the total population. Research by Leicester City Council showed a rise in the non white population over the period from 1983-1991 whilst the overall white population has fallen. It is likely that this trend has continued and the number of Asians and Muslims in Leicester has grown compared to white people since 1991. Census information shows the majority of Asian citizens in the 0-30 years age range (10 years younger than the average white person), with an equal number of men and women. The Asian population appear to be relatively well-off and has a high level of participation in the community with the highest rates of owner-occupation and access to cars and a similar degree of economical activity to their white counterparts, with slightly more being self-employed. The unemployed tend to be retired, sick or students.¹⁵ However, this data disguises the differences between Asian groups, making it difficult to differentiate the Muslim experience. It does not reveal the number of Asian workers in manual jobs and less skilled occupations and their lower earnings (compared to white workers and by national comparison) found by Duffy and Lincoln (1990). Updated information with religious identifiers, to be provided by the next Census, is therefore sorely needed.

Economic/ class based divisions: The Muslim participants were, in fact, mainly from an economically disadvantaged inner city area of Leicester, although well-educated. Most of the Contact group were from an urban middle-class area, also well-educated and expressed liberal views. The non-Contact group were from a rural economically rich area but turned out to have traditional working class values.

Other variables accounted for in analysis included demographic details, political/ religious affiliations and media usage. Much of this background information was gathered in the form of a questionnaire which was completed by the participants in the initial stages of the group (Appendix d). This questionnaire allowed the self-designation of ethnic origin and other aspects of identity such as linguistic. This information was gathered in recognition of the heterogeneity of Muslims and self-designation was thought the best method for allowing for the expression of diverse conceptions of complex ethnicity (Lee, 1993; Owen, 1996). Due to the small scale of this research, I thought that this would not lead to problems in managing the range of responses during analysis.

¹⁵ Data from 'Leicester, *Key facts: Ethnic Minorities, 1991 Census*', Environment and Development Department, Leicester City Council, 1995.

Gender

The Muslim groups were single sex, one group each of females and males. The other groups were mixed, two groups in each category. I decided to convene single sex Muslim groups, following discussions with female Muslims who insisted that this would have to be the case, based on the norms monitoring mixing between genders in their culture. The nature of the group therefore reflects the social networks these groups move in. The other groups were therefore mixed gender. Whilst I considered that the boys may inhibit the females from speaking, after observing them in their classroom environment, I felt that this would not be the case. The power relations, however, were examined on analysis (see Chapter 5, p. 308). I also felt it worthwhile to have mixed groups in the hope that this would lead to a mix of discourses and ideas such as the techniques women use for sharing information, breaking the ice for the males who may be more reticent to 'reveal' themselves and who may be more concerned initially with their public image (as found by Haug, 1983).

Focus group procedure and materials

I planned to present two texts relating to two different stories, each from a different newspaper, in each session. These would be selected on the basis of the qualitative study and that they would be recent in the memory of the participants. So, the first session may include an article from *The Sun* on one topic and an article from *The Mail* on another. In the following session, two further texts would be presented. This would ensure most of the stories analysed qualitatively would be covered and all the newspapers. In fact, this was determined by the practicalities of timetabling (see p. 68).

Following completion of the questionnaire, (Appendix d), the participants firstly responded in a written form individually, followed by a group discussion (see Appendix e for written question). The written response forces participants to commit themselves to an answer before entering the group, allowing an assessment of how groups dynamics and conformity to group norms impinge on the individual (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997). The participants were then asked to recount the subject matter of the story and give their reactions to it. Topic guides for each story and group were used to ensure the group was focused on its purpose (see Appendix f) but I also followed the sequence of discussion and groups' agenda as it arose as a way of interpreting the issues of importance to them (Kitzinger, 1995). As far as possible, I tried to ask open-ended questions to prevent my ideas leading the participants. In this way, the opportunity was provided for unanticipated

issues to arise. The sessions were tape-recorded for reliability (Peräkylä, 1997). This whole procedure was expected to take approximately two hours.

Two volunteers were asked to take notes, (taken from the pre-existing group to avoid creating inhibitions), one as insurance in case the tape recorder broke down, as an aid to transcription in identifying who was speaking (Bertrand, Brown and Ward, 1992) and in aiding the transcription of 'overlapping speech' (Seiter, 1996). The other took a note of body language and facial expressions, as I considered this was important in relating meaning, for example, as a reaction to others opinions (Hodge and Tripp, 1986).

I aimed to re-convene the initial focus groups once (see Table 2.2, p. 70). I hoped that this would allow the participants to become familiar with me in order to create a permissive and comfortable environment for open discussion but not over familiar with the research procedures so they begin reacting deliberately to their expectations of the context. I planned to delay the re-convened groups to give enough time for me to complete some analysis so any points of discrepancy found between the individual responses and responses in the group discussion could be followed up. If I felt the objectives had not been met on completion of the groups, I planned to carry out more. However, if they reached 'saturation' point before the planned sessions were completed, in other words no new ideas or issues were being identified, I would terminate them early (Lunt, 1996; Krueger, 1988; Preston et al, 1995; Vaughn et al, 1996).

These groups were preceded by two pilot study groups; a group of female Muslims and a Contact group. Apart from the practical limitations discussed below, they worked well so I proceeded as planned.

Practical limitations: Actual implementation

Changes in the original plan were largely based on the practicalities of timetabling; a problem of access. A common difficulty with studies involving focus groups, illustrated by the length of time it took to complete these groups, the first taking place in March and the last at the end of June. Access issues arose due to the timing of the groups, in the Summer term, when revision periods and exams were taking place. Groups had to be organised around this and the drop off in attendance towards the end of the year also caused problems in re-convening exact replications of previous groups (in terms of membership). The non-Muslim groups were held in their 'natural' state, i.e. established subject groups. This led to participants with varying ethnic backgrounds assembled together in the non-Muslim

(Contact) groups (having initially planned two separate groups). This had some restraining effects in discussing cultural and racial issues (see Chapter 5). The Muslim groups, however, had to be amalgamated from different subject groups and convened outside lesson time. This made access difficult, trying to arrange a location and time suiting everyone and motivating students to give up their free time. Having held the first group, this improved as the participants found themselves discussing Islam.

At the city college (Muslims and Contact groups) sessions were restricted to one hour timetabled slots. Only one text could therefore be explored in a session. The restriction on time meant only three topics were covered in any depth; education, relationships and blasphemy. However, additional coverage of and ideas about Islam were also discussed in the groups. The original and revised plans, based on these constraints, are shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. Rather than having a two hour session with both groups in each category which was then repeated (Table 2.2), the time spent with them was cut by half (to two one hour sessions for each group). However, as the number of non-Muslims was determined by the number in their subject groups, I ended up with more participants. I do feel that the research would have benefited from further groups examining alternative texts to confirm and make more definite claims about the findings. This was not a possibility as the term finished at the end of June, preventing the execution of further groups. Despite this, I feel that 'saturation' point was reached in some areas as attitudes were repeated in terms of the perception of Muslims and media bias.

The limited time available meant following up issues from previous sessions was virtually impossible. In any case, the intention to engage in a symmetrical process of data collection and coding, transcribing field notes before returning to the setting to follow up lines of interest, proved to be very difficult to achieve due to the time involved in processing the information. In total it took seven months to both execute the groups, transcribe and analyse the data in NUD.IST.

Timetabling at the rural college (with the non-Contact groups) allowed for longer sessions. Although these groups were not repeated, equal time (and number of texts) was spent with them. These groups were closer to saturation point due to their lack of knowledge and interest in the issues.

Materials (see Appendix g): The texts finally selected for the groups were:

- 1) Relationships: The end of the marriage: Sarah Cook: *The Mail*, 11/8/97, p. 17 (analysed qualitatively in Chp 4: 152-160).
- 2) Rushdie/ blasphemy: Proposals for the introduction of laws on religious discrimination: *The Mail*, 30/7/97, p. 13, (analysed Chp 4: 181-183).
- 3) Education: Funding for two Muslim schools is granted: *The Guardian*, 10/1/98, p. 7 (Chp 4: 230/1).
- 4) Fundamentalism: Egypt accuses Britain of protecting Islamic militants following the Luxor massacre: *The Times*, 24/11/97, p. 12 (Chp 4: 192/3, 196).

The texts selected were those deemed to be the most provocative for each story in order to stimulate discussion. However, I felt that there should also be an opportunity for the participants to comment on the differences between newspapers through exposure to a range. *The Guardian* article was therefore included for its more positive stance. The popularity of the articles, however, was based on how far the participants identified with the story rather than a straightforward division between tabloid and broadsheet appeal (see Chapter 5).

Table 2.2: Original plan for implementing focus groups.

March-May 1998						
Pilot groups: Mixed: contact, Muslim f	Group1: Muslim Female	Group2: Muslim Male	Group3: Non-Muslim. Contact a	Group 4: Non-Muslim Contact b	Group 5: Non-Muslim No contact a	Group 6: Non-Muslim No contact b
	Repeated	Repeated	Repeated	Repeated	Repeated	Repeated

Each group has 7 members, 14 in each category: total 42 participants. All 2hrs.

Table 2.3: Actual implementation of the focus groups.

March-June 1998					
Muslim male: 1 1/2hr	Muslim female: 1hr	Non-Muslim, with contact a 1hr	Non-Muslim with contact b 1hr	Non-Muslim no contacta 2hr	Non-Muslim no contactb 2hr
Group1: Relationships 6 members + 1 Sikh	Group1: Relationships/ Education 6 members	Group 1: Blasphemy 9 members	Group 1: Blasphemy 10 members	Group1: Relationships/ Blasphemy 10 members	Group1: Education 6 members
Group 2: Blasphemy 6 members	Group2: Blasphemy 4 members, + 1 Sikh	Group 2: Education 9 members	Group 2: Relationships 10 members		
	Group 3 Fundamentalism 5 members	12 Muslims, 21 contact, 16 no contact = 49 participants			

Processing Information: NUD.IST

To enhance both the organisation of the data and reliability of the project, a method of qualitative computer analysis was used. Based on anticipated needs, I selected NUD.IST

4. Having undertaken research into different programmes, my own lack of expertise in being able to comparatively assess them, meant this decision was mainly based on accessibility reasons.

NUD.IST allows text-retrieval operations which find patterns in the text without subjective judgement in coding (Hansen, 1992). However, its main benefit is in allowing the systematic coding (indexing in NUD.IST) of data and subsequent complex searching of the index system.¹⁶ Researchers follow the same epistemological principles and therefore methods as with traditional manual qualitative analysis. In this case, coding the data on the basis of the constant comparative technique (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) whereby categories are formed in relation to incidents and refined as the researcher works through the material. Relationships and themes are searched for between categories and data is integrated into a theoretical structure (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). It is evident that computer aided research dramatically increases the speed with which this can take place and increases precision when dealing with a large amount of data. It also allows for deviant case analysis through pattern testing. However, the researcher should still be aware of the pitfalls of this method where new codes arise to which old data must be indexed.¹⁷ Whilst encouraging the definition of codes to enhance consistency, NUD.IST also offers flexibility in providing several strategies for the revision, redefinition, relocation, and collapsing of codes which allows for this recoding of old data to new codes. The categories (called Nodes in NUD.IST) can be coded freely or organised into a tree/familial structure. The shaping of the index system itself is theory producing in developing a conceptual map of the study. This map can be continually modified by using the strategies described above.

NUD.IST allows researchers to write memos noting their reflections on the conceptual meaning of the data and provides coding stripes to show how it has been indexed. Strategies of analysis are therefore transparent and open resulting in an 'audit trail'

¹⁶ After transcribing both the written and oral data from the groups, these were imported into NUD.IST. Both types of data were indexed using the same codes but their original sources were identified to allow comparisons to be made.

¹⁷ Despite the theory building nature of this process, formulating some ideas of codes, informed by both theory, previous stages of the research and familiarity with the data gained in carrying out and transcribing the focus groups, assists in this matter.

which allows others to examine the thought processes involved in the work (Maykut & Moerhouse, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

NUD.IST further challenges the dichotomy of quantitative and qualitative methods in allowing qualitative material to be quantified (in offering statistical summaries of text retrievals). The benefits of this are not to provide 'hard' data from 'soft' but in being able to test one's theory and show the number of cases which fit it (Richards and Richards, 1991).

Despite the massive investment of time and effort to learn how to use the programme given the current lack of expertise, I found computer-assisted analysis extremely helpful for mainly organisational reasons. It also aided the analytical process in permitting operations which could not be attempted manually. This resulted in a finer analysis and description of the data, the tree structure allowing search commands to be instrumented in relation to a multitude of codes (including demographic variables). However, it should be remembered that the programme is merely a tool for analysis and it is the researcher who must then interpret the meaning of those patterns arising. It is also important that the researcher remains focused on the aims of the research and does not become mechanistic, focusing on amassing data that has very little meaning (Marshall, 1990). One of the problems of NUD.IST is that it packages findings, often making them appear falsely unambiguous and obscuring diversity. I therefore had to ensure that the contradictions and complexities of the data were fully interrogated. In addition, the 'decontextualisation of data' can be a problem particular with small text units (Tesch, 1990). However, NUD.IST does make the movement between documents, returning to contextual information, easy.

Limitations in the approach

As was expected, some of the problems with using the encoding/ decoding model were that the production of meaning is more complex than the positions it offers allows. This included the 'overtly political' nature of the decoding positions (Wren-Lewis, 1983) which forced readers into pre-existing categories. This research confirms that not only do people move between these 'ideal typical positions' (Hall, cited in Cruz and Lewis, 1994: 256) when reading a text but it has identified different levels of reading. Not all resistant readings can be described as consciously political. The Muslim females, in particular, reconstructed their own meanings (rather than recognising the ideology and rejecting it). Would this still amount to Eco's (1972: 110) aberrant decoding or 'misreadings'? He

suggested that this was the norm for mass media messages due to the contradictions in the ideologies of text and reader. It is evident that the readings identified here constitute 'preferred readings' to each group involved, as Wren-Lewis (1983) has suggested, but using and identifying these decoding positions has allowed the scope for possible readings to be established, locating shared communities of meaning. Perhaps what I have provided approximates the 'set of rules' (proposed by Morley, 1981) for decoding texts on Islam; cultural proximity, knowledge and media literacy.

This project recognises that meaning is not fixed in texts, but texts attempt to fix it. Morley's (1981) question as to where the preferred meaning lies-in the text, with the analyst or audience, is still relevant. The analyst brings with them their own socio-cultural expectations when decoding the text. However, rather than give a subjective reading, the analyst tries to make a critical reading, taking account of the conditions in which the text was produced. This is always limited to the discourse the culturally situated analyst knows. The results of this research indicates that there are preferred meanings in texts, as interpretations were structured around the dominant meanings which groups were mainly able to identify.

The complexity of meaning and its continual reinterpretation, the 'discursive effect' (Henry, 1971: 91-95), cannot be mapped and then fixed by one-off interviews. I repeated my groups as an attempt to analyse modifications based on this continual process. However, it will continue to be a challenge to researchers to identify how these meanings then circulate in society and the way participants act on this information. Is it ultimately their own 'preferred readings' which they circulate in their own social circles resulting in perpetually negotiated social meanings?

MacGregor and Morrison (1995) draw attention to the problem of ripping texts from their overall context. This applies not only in terms of the overall tone and presentation of the paper, the lack of familiarity with this as opposed to regular readers may constitute a different reading, but also from the development of the story in the paper. It also removes the article from its reading context. One of the solutions to these problems is contextualisation, taking account of the 'space-time settings', how the media is used and understood in the flow of every day life (Corner, 1991: 279). However, the importance of context is considered to be overstated by Corner (1991) given that the crucial factors are the text and reader and the validity of the focus group setting through which meanings are

produced. An in-depth contextualised research project requires a massive commitment in terms of the input required. It is certainly necessary to use the methods applied here when paying attention to a specific issue which may appear in the media infrequently and is perhaps given little attention to. I have therefore tried to capture the essence of the pre-existing group and capture moments of meaning. Rather than reduce the discourse produced within these settings to having less authenticity than others, we should follow Dahlgren's (1988) example, that context generates certain types of meaning which are all valid.

A further problem posed is the instability of meaning, that people do not have fixed ideas they carry around with them on different subjects. This is further exacerbated when that subject is alien or new to the participants. If we also take account of psychoanalytic theory regarding the subconscious, it is even harder to be conclusive about whether we have captured what meaning is. Caldwell (1977) asks what can we know in these circumstances? Particularly when the analysis and reporting of findings involves the white researcher representing the Other. Said (1981) suggested that knowledge of other cultures is possible if the researcher does not naturalise the results. Recognising that there is no 'versionless reality' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 62) and that 'reality' is constructed by both the participants and the analyst as a result of their own positionings, allows the researcher to take measures to deal with this, such as applying discourse analysis and monitoring the power dynamics.

When transcribing the focus group tapes, for example, I felt it necessary to 'problematize the transcript' (Seiter, 1996: 110) and develop a system which could be used to analyse 'the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding that is often manifested in nods, silences, humour' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994), recording pauses, sighs, tones of voice, rate of speech, reflecting on topics left unsaid, dropped or avoided and taking note of turn taking as illustrative of power relations (as suggested by Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). This strategy recognises that the audience is unknowable in some totalising way. The aim of analysis, therefore, is not to reveal any 'truth' but to contribute to a process of understanding by maximising the validity of the research findings through acknowledgement of the limits and constraints of the research context and analysis of the nondiscursive behaviours, rituals and meanings of the group in relation to this. This involves the researcher being 'self-reflexive' in considering their own role in shaping the outcomes. As

Hedges (1985: 85) maintains 'It is a mistake to assume that there is a pristine Platonic reality under the muddle of our public utterances to which really sharp research tools can cut unerringly through. Underneath the mess of language lies a mess of thought and tangle of behaviour. If our research tools cannot recognise ambivalence and inconsistency as real and important they will not help us to a very profound understanding of human thought and behaviour'. According to Dahlgren (1988) the lack of conclusive evidence causes methodological anxiety when planning reception studies. We should abandon the idea of trying to catch 'real' and fixed meanings then. Research about meaning is, in this sense, always outdated but it can capture a moment of meaning at a given historical conjuncture. It also shows what people are willing to say publicly about Islam, these are the meanings therefore circulating in society which have real consequences for Muslims. Ultimately, for the research purposes, it is this aspect of meaning that is required.

The difficulty then, is in linking perceptions (derived 'meanings') to media discourse, even if they match. It is one thing to identify a correlation between the two but another to imply a cause and effect relationship. Claims should always be tentative and treated with caution.

Some of the problems of group effect and interpreting meaning could be addressed by: including mixed (category) audience groups as well as separate groups, to see if positions change when there is no consensus, as a way of examining the effects of the setting and the redefinition of meaning through contact; engaging the peer group in carrying out research to minimise researcher effect, and analysing the same groups in different contexts, thus creating a meaning trail (Dahlgren, 1988).

Further (general) limitations

Whilst I did not feel that my gender inhibited the groups in any way, this would have been an issue for the female Muslims given a male researcher. The males are familiar with and confident expressing themselves in front of female, non-Muslim teachers. I do feel, however, that the Muslim groups may have been more explicit with a Muslim researcher.

The self-designation of categories in the questionnaire may have had positive effects for ethnic origin but for not for determining religiosity and media usage. Requesting more information, however, allowed me to make an informed judgement on these. More evidence for 'Interest in news' should have been requested given the tendency to report this, based on the desire to appear to be a good citizen.

Generalisability

Reliability is often assessed in terms of the representativeness of the results. Small scale qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of generalisability. Many researchers believe, however, that this is not the purpose of focus groups which aim to reveal an 'in-depth understanding of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences and document the context from which these were arrived' (Vaughn et al, 1996: 18; Jensen, 1991; MacGregor and Morrison, 1995). Siebold et al (1992) therefore suggest that rather than being interrogated for their reliability or replicability, we should question the dependability and adequacy of the findings of such projects. In other words was the process of analysis rigorous and are the findings well-grounded and justifiable? Using a computer programme such as NUD.IST increases the chances of this (see p. 71).

Attempting to engage in a 'falsely universalising theory' obscures the diversity of social groups (Harding, 1986). Muslims are a heterogeneous group with different nationalities, sects, languages etc. as well as demographic differences. Given arguments regarding the increased religiosity of young Muslims, verified here, would, for example, using different age groups produce different responses? When engaging in this type of research, rather than attempting to generalise, we should look for the complexities and tensions in the discourse of groups to illustrate the dissonance in their lives (Siebold et al, 1992). However, attention to prior theory (in relation to the representation of Islam) led me to develop my own theory of homogenised representational practice and social groupings. Completing the research required me to shift my position in order to allow for these complexities. These groups were constructed to be as homogeneous as possible in order to restrict the number of variables at play and offer 'a glimpse of culture' which could then be 'set in systematic relationship to other glimpses' (Fiske, 1994: 195). Part of the relevance of these 'snapshots' of differently situated groups is that they contribute to understandings of them and subsequently contribute to meeting their needs (Wallston, 1981). It is hoped that this research can make an impact in this way.

In this chapter I have described the methodologies employed in this analysis, considered theoretical and methodological problems they pose and have addressed the limitations and gaps in my analysis which may provide pointers for future research. It is inevitable that research is always restricted by practical constraints. I have tried in this

project to incorporate as much as is feasible given the restricted time, budget and word limit. In these circumstances, this and future projects should attempt to add to the growing body of research which together can provide a comprehensive picture of an aspect of the social world.

Chapter 3:

Framing Islam: A Quantitative Analysis.

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to develop the framework of reporting of British Islam. It covers all articles in *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* in the three year period from 1994-1996. Particular attention is paid to the following aspects: what is covered; how it is framed; how often articles occur; in which papers; where the action takes place; who are the main actors; identifying patterns of coverage over a period of time. Measuring the frequencies by which newspapers publish articles on a particular subject gives an indication of editorial policy, the attention and thus importance attached to a subject, as well as the degree to which a paper has informed its readers. As well as identifying the amount and prominence of the material (measured by 'type of article', its form), this research is also interested in analysing how the material is presented. This is achieved by examining the type of topics appearing together; how the material is framed. This reveals a richer impression of the content. However, quantitative content analysis is limited in its ability to do this. This chapter, therefore, is fairly descriptive, providing the context for the qualitative data through which a more detailed analysis can take place.

The data presented here shows not only a narrow framework of reporting but a close correspondence in the types of issues covered between papers, indicating the assumptions (cultural consensus) being made about what constitutes news in relation to Islam. The intention here is to not only show the limited range of topics associated with Islam but also the predominant themes which run through the coverage, a closer analysis of which will be examined in the following chapter. The findings will also be compared to those global images of Islam described in Chapter One to identify how far they apply in a British national context.

By selecting newspapers which represent a left and right of centre perspective, this analysis incorporates a range of views currently held in the quality British press. The subjects of interest can be regarded as cultural units in providing valid cultural indicators of

symbolic content.¹ Thus, what is provided here is a comprehensive picture of current manifestations of British Islam as represented in two UK broadsheets at a particular historical conjuncture.

Global to Local

In order to understand the findings relating to the British situation, I am providing details of coverage of Islam in its international entirety to contextualise this. At the time this thesis was being prepared, international events dominating the attention of the news media included: ongoing conflicts in Algeria, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir; the initial trials for war crimes of mainly Serbs in Bosnia; political coverage of elections in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran (which also saw the withdrawal of European ambassadors after accusations of international terrorism by Germany, and the monitoring of relations following the election of moderate Mohammad Khatami), and Pakistan which also celebrated its 50th year of independence in 1997; the visits of various dignitaries, for example, the Queen's visit to Pakistan and Princess Diana's visits to Pakistan and Bosnia; the disastrous fires in Mecca at the time of pilgrimage; the ongoing Israel-Palestine peace talks; terrorist bombs in Pakistan, Israel, France and Nairobi; the build up to further conflict with Iraq in the Gulf and American air strikes in Afghanistan and the Sudan. This appears to validate the claims of the authors cited in Chapter One that coverage of Islam (and the Third World in general) revolves around conflict, terrorism, social and political turmoil, and disaster.

The extensive coverage of global events in relation to Islam is significant in sustaining public awareness. This data illustrates that the main significance and focus on Islam is global. Given that over a four year period, 1993-1997, there were 8,075 articles on Islam, only 1224 of these were about British Muslims, just 15%, (amounting to approximately 6:1 articles a day), images of Muslims abroad will be at the forefront of people's minds.² This is further illustrated by a consistent reference to world events in the

¹ The term 'subjects' is used to describe general issues of interests to avoid confusion given the use of 'topics' as a category of analysis.

² The overall frequencies of coverage on Islam (global and local) are also included for 1997. However, 1997 was not analysed in detail as part of the main quantitative analysis as this was conducted in 1997. This data was collected afterwards to allow a continual monitoring of the patterns of coverage.

articles on British Islam, representing the idea to the public that Muslims are one and the same.³

Whilst it is not possible, in this analysis, to show a clear correlation between coverage of global and British Islam, international events and their reporting can provide an indication of patterns of coverage of British Islam which occur as a consequence. Global events concentrating on war and aggression allow hostility towards Islam to become more acceptable and often raise questions regarding 'the enemy within'. Where there are direct links between global events and British interests such as the Luxor massacre in Egypt, when a number of British tourists were killed; and the American air strikes on Sudan and Afghanistan following the Nairobi bombings; both events led to a flurry of activity in the press regarding terrorist activity in the UK.

Table 3.1: Coverage of Global and British Islam comparatively.

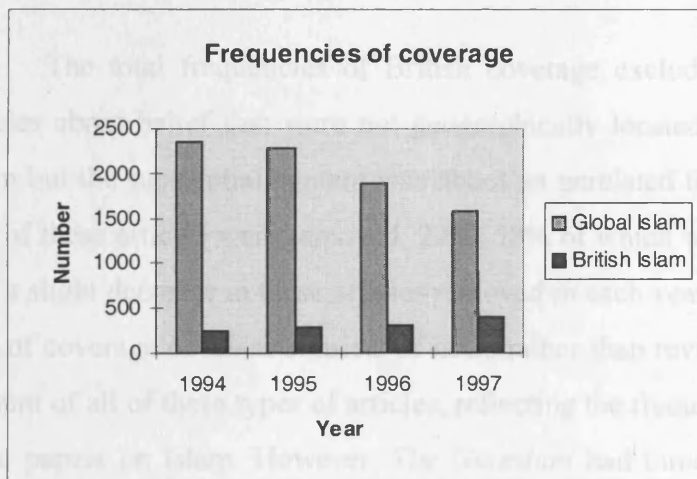
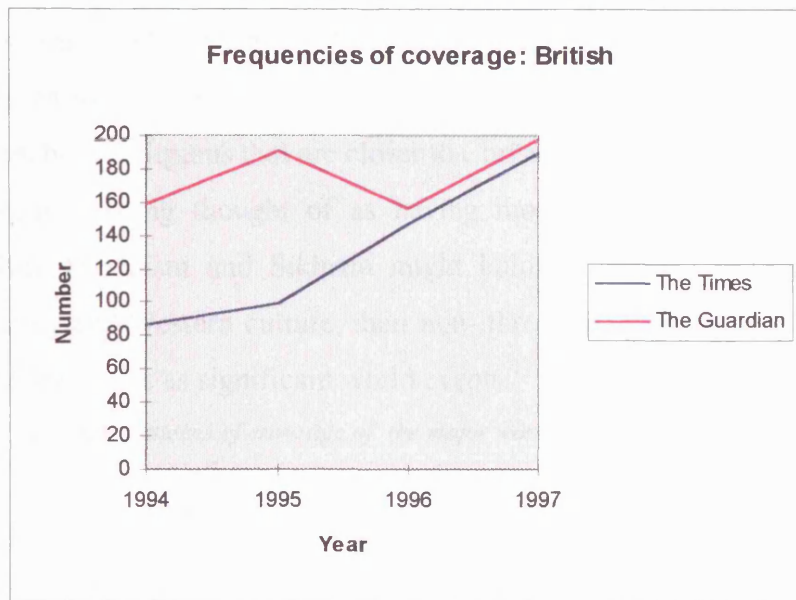


Table 3.1 shows, however, that whilst global coverage certainly outweighs local, this type of coverage is decreasing, from 2275 articles in 1994 to 1568 in 1997. Coverage of British Islam, on the other hand, is increasing, from 244 articles in 1994 to 387 in 1997. This trend is reflected in both *The Times* and *The Guardian*, although *The Guardian* continues to cover issues relating to Islam more extensively than *The Times* (on average it accounts for 58% of coverage) (See Table 3.2).⁴ However, a different situation has arisen for the coverage of British Islam (See Table 3.3). Whilst *The Guardian's* coverage

³ It could be argued that the amount of material generated on global Islam is a reflection of the numerous countries which constitute Islam internationally. However, given the home news focus of the British press, this indicates a perception of Muslims as having little to do with daily activity in Britain.

⁴ Unless identified separately, reference to *The Guardian* also includes *The Observer*. The same applies for *The Times/Sunday Times*.

Table 3.3: Comparative frequencies of *The Guardian* and *The Times*.



The total frequencies of British coverage excluded obituaries, reviews, general articles about belief that were not geographically located and articles which referred to Islam but the substantial content was about an unrelated topic. Over the three year period 246 of these articles were removed, 23%, 58% of which were from *The Guardian*.⁸ There was a slight decrease in these articles removed in each year. This illustrates how the larger part of coverage of Islam consists of news rather than reviews. Both papers had a similar amount of all of these types of articles, reflecting the frequencies of coverage in general in these papers on Islam. However, *The Guardian* had three times as many articles which refer to Islam than *The Times* and slightly more stories on general belief whilst *The Times* had slightly more book reviews. This illustrates a slightly different emphasis, *The Times* with its literary focus and *The Guardian*'s more general interest and openness to other groups and beliefs.⁹

To put this coverage in perspective, I compared coverage of Islam to the coverage of the other world religions (Table 3.4).¹⁰ Coverage of Islam accounts for 22% of all coverage of the major world faiths. Islam is covered to a greater degree than the average

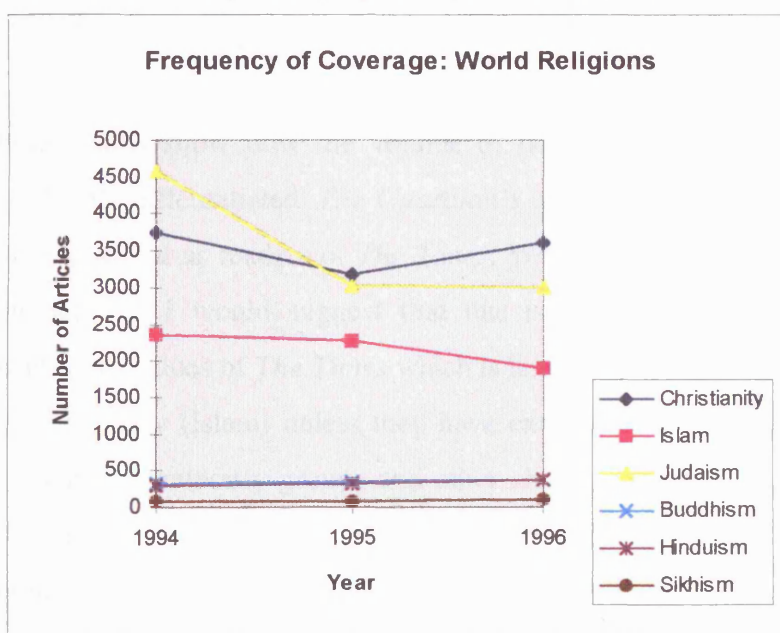
⁸ From this point, the data is based on the three year period only, 1994-1996, as measured by the coding schedule.

⁹ This difference in news values is also illustrated by a different criteria for the inclusion of obituaries. Although the total amount of obituaries is the same for each paper, on closer examination, the amount for each paper differs widely in each year despite a similarity in newsgathering techniques for obituaries.

¹⁰ Only global coverage due to the laborious task of separating global from local coverage which requires an examination of every article.

number of 4990 articles, at 6507 over the three year period. Its coverage is similar to that of Christianity and Judaism, with slightly less articles. However, all these three religions are covered to a far greater extent than the others. This could be a reflection of Judaism and Islam being religions that are closer to Christianity in terms of doctrine and geography, with Judaism being thought of as having more parity within the cultural consensus. Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism might hold less appeal due to their distance from Christianity and Western culture, their non- threatening status and lack of involvement in what the West sees as significant world events.¹¹

Table 3.4: Patterns of coverage of the major world religions.



The difference between papers is of little significance except in *The Times*' coverage of Christianity, including 806 more articles over the three years. This could reflect a more traditional emphasis in the paper which is also evident in its domestic coverage. As was previously evident, *The Guardian*'s coverage of Islam is greater, a difference of 1071 articles in the three year period.

The Guardian's coverage of all these religions tends to fluctuate whilst *The Times* is steadily increasing (except for Islam where *The Times* shows a decrease). It is not immediately obvious why there should be such fluctuations but the data does put coverage of Islam into a broader context.

¹¹ In a search of all articles on the world religions using the same searching mechanism as for the main project the results were as follows: Over the three year period: 10,577 articles on Judaism (35.3%); Christianity: 10,548 (35.2%); Islam: 6507 (21.7%); Buddhism: 1070 (3.5%); Hinduism: 978 (3.2%) and Sikhism: 260 (0.86%). Coverage is relatively consistent in each year (Table 3.4).

Domestic News

I have already referred to the amount of coverage on British Islam within a global context. Before continuing with this section, it is useful to reiterate these frequencies of coverage more explicitly (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Coverage of British Islam, 1994-1996.

Newspaper	No of Articles	% of total articles
<i>The Guardian</i>	406	48.5
<i>The Times</i>	232	27.7
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	101	12.1
<i>The Observer</i>	98	11.7
Total	837	100

These results show how the volume of news on British Islam reaching various audiences is highly differentiated. *The Guardian's* readers are presented with almost twice the amount of material as readers of *The Times*. Whilst I am unable to take account of the tone of the articles, I would suggest that this is a reflection of the more traditional, establishment news values of *The Times* which is less likely to take an interest in items with less cultural proximity (Islam) unless they have extreme news value. The more extensive coverage assigned to minority groups and other alternative issues and perspectives in *The Guardian* is consistent with the results of other research where it has been seen to express more tolerant and accommodating interpretations (Hartmann et al, 1974; Lacey and Longman, 1997; McQuail, 1977, van Dijk, 1991). However, the differences in the proportion of space allocated to minority groups in the daily papers is not reflected in the Sundays whose coverage has more parity with each other. This pattern of coverage, in terms of the percentage share of articles for each newspaper, is fairly consistent across the variables examined. For example, coverage of certain topics, such as education, tend to reflect the proportionate share of the total articles in each paper. This is a logical premise, attention will therefore be paid in particular to coverage which does not reflect this pattern.

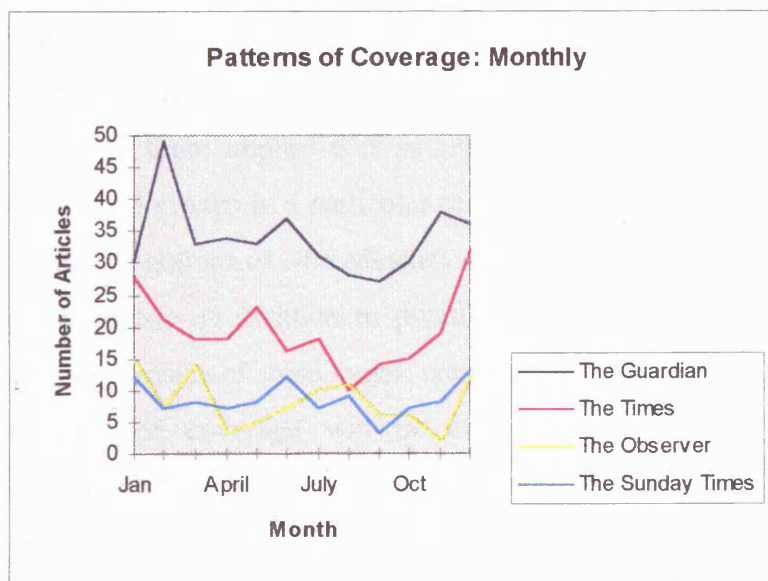
Periodicity of coverage

Table 3.6 clearly illustrates the changing patterns in coverage of Islam. These patterns of coverage reflect both the event-centred nature of news¹² and news gathering processes in general, reflecting quiet and busy times. For instance, the period before

¹² Focusing on events which fit with the news values of a particular culture for which news gathering mechanisms are organised to maximise the retrieval of these events.

Parliament is in session has the lowest amount of coverage. This fits with the many news items on policy which occur on British Islam, including education and religious discrimination laws. The main irregularity to this pattern of coverage of Islam is the increase in articles appearing in December. This could be due to the increase in dialogue and thought given to religion at this time of the year, especially given the tendency to refer to Islam in relation to Christianity uncovered by this analysis. However, whilst patterns in the timing of coverage are shared between daily and their sister Sunday papers, they do not show a parity with each other (see Table 3.6). This illustrates how coverage is not just dependent on 'events' but on the differing news values of individual papers. For example, both papers have a similar amount of articles occurring in December. However, these account for 24% of all articles on British Islam in *The Times/Sunday Times* whilst only 12% of *The Guardian/Observer's* articles occur in this month. This is an example of *The Times'* tendency to invoke Islam in relation to Christianity rather than as a subject on its own terms. Some of the peaks and troughs, however, do correspond, giving credence to the 'issue attention cycle' of news proposed by Downs (1972).¹³

Table 3.6: Monthly patterns of coverage in each paper, 1994-1996.



Topical analysis

The most important variable in this analysis is that of 'topic'. By focusing on topics, it is possible to identify the material presented to the public on Islam and, therefore, the

¹³ Although, as Downs argues, minority issues receive much less public interest generally than majority concerns.

likely concerns and agenda of the prevailing majority (ethnic) group. I have analysed other variables in relation to this to show how the material is framed. My definition of topic is the overall subject category of an article (Hartmann et al, 1974), rather the topical macrostructures of van Dijk, 1991 (see Appendix c for definition).

The topic categories chosen for analysis are based on my own familiarity with press coverage of Islam and are thus fairly exhaustive and inclusive in terms of providing a relevant framework for analysis. This is confirmed by the few articles falling outside these categories, being coded as 'Other', only 19, 2.3%. The fact that groups of differentiated peoples can be defined in terms of these 41 specific topics is illustrative of their restrictive representation.¹⁴

An analysis of the occurrence and distribution of topics can reveal the criterion of newsworthiness in relation to Islam, reflecting particular cultural and professional ideologies. Topics are selected on the basis of their news value and carried for a given time depending on considered importance. The twin pressures of limited space and inter-newspaper competition often determine the above. The cyclical nature of the news, structured by the market, means some issues are vulnerable to being squeezed out of debate and others are always approached in the same ways. Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) drew attention to how different social problems have to compete for space and attention. Increased coverage then, implies that an issue has some salience or importance to the interests of powerful groups in a particular social context. Islam's ability to be newsworthy relies on established notions of who Muslims are and what they represent to British culture.

For this reason, in addition to pressures of space in this thesis, and the relative infrequency of occurrence of some topics, only the most frequently occurring topics and any unusual elements of coverage will be examined here (within their framework of representation, i.e. how they occur in combination with subtopics and references). This analysis will demonstrate that although an examination of topics is important to establish areas of concern in relation to Islam, it is the way that they are framed which is most significant. It is the consistency in the way topics are framed which reveals the frameworks of representation on British Islam. The topics are the vehicles for the framing or definition

¹⁴ Although, this raises methodological issues as to whether I have imposed a restrictive framework on the coverage through my codes. I would argue that although this method of analysis is reductive in some ways (to a specific cultural interpretation which can never be neutral), my codes were developed through an interactive process of refinement, and the limited number of articles coded outside them gives strength to the validity of the framework.

of Islam in the press. They may even be forced on the agenda by Muslim groups themselves but it is in the way they are framed that gives newspapers the ability to define Islam for their audience.¹⁵ The few themes underlying most of the topics examined here are imbued with negativity and represent Islam as a threat both to internal security and traditional values, as deviant and prone to segregation. For this reason, I will examine topics and their significance first, followed by an analysis of the themes they represent.¹⁶

Main topics: in what context does Islam appear in the British broadsheet press?

The statistics which have emerged out of this analysis show Islam to be widely dispersed amongst the topics chosen for the framework for analysis but occurring with few others (see Appendix h for a full breakdown). However, there are clear clusterings around certain topics that emerge as dominant throughout this particular period of time.

The topics most frequently associated with British Islam are:

Its place in the education system: 128 articles, 15.3% of total coverage.

Relationships (marriage) between Muslims/Muslims and non-Muslims:

60 articles, 7.2%

Islamic fundamentalism in Britain: 57 articles, 6.8%

Muslims' political activity: 54 articles, 6.5%

Muslims' criminal behaviour: 43 articles, 5.1%

Muslims and entertainment and media: 41 articles, 4.9%

Prince Charles and Islam: 41 articles, 4.9%

Muslims and their belief/practices: 33 articles, 3.9%

Islam/Muslims' relations with Christianity/Christians: 28 articles, 3.3%

Freedom of speech: 28 articles, 3.3%.

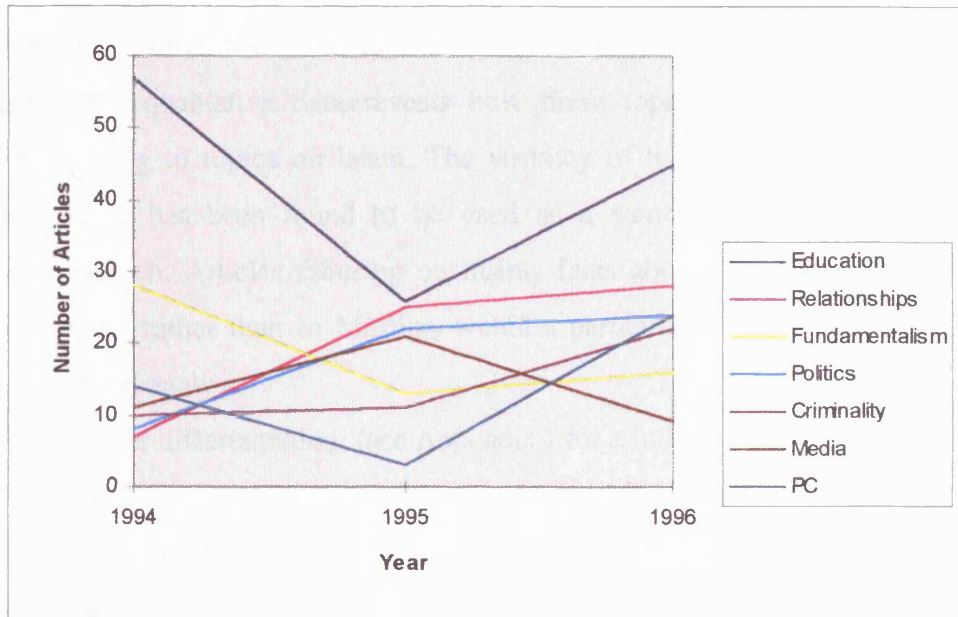
Table 3.7 displays the patterns of representation of these topics in each year and newspaper. It clearly shows a consistency in adherence to a news framework in relation to Islam by both papers and across this period of time.

¹⁵ This 'struggle around the image' will be explored as the thesis develops.

¹⁶ To clarify the difference between topics and themes. The topic is the main subject of the article analysed. Themes are broader issues or discourses which run across topics (see Appendix j). These will be explored more fully in the qualitative analysis.

Table 3.7: Occurrence of topics annually.

PC=Prince Charles



The fluctuations in amounts of coverage appear to be event related but only if these events are consonant with the framework which has already developed. For example, in 1994, educational reforms under the then Secretary of Education, John Patten, required children to spend at least half their time in Religious Education on Christianity and the rest on the remaining world religions, and hold daily acts of worship reflecting this. This act of legislation was a response to real tensions, anxieties and demands around education which became prominent in the late 1980s which have thrown education onto the agenda and which the press seized hold of in order to express their own perspectives on the issue. In this year there was also increasing concern in the press regarding the rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups within British universities which has since slipped off the agenda although fundamentalism remains high. A rise in the number of articles in 1995 follow particularly salient events in this year. For example, the increase in articles on conversion, adjustment to culture and gender was the result of a number of (newsworthy) relationships formed between Muslims and non-Muslims, for example, Jemima and Imran Khan. Whilst *The Guardian's* coverage re-stabilises to an average figure, these events triggered a continuity value in *The Times*, elevating these topics about Islam to a higher level of interest. However, the relatively low quantity of these topics; conversion, gender etc., (which, according to the literature, are prevalent representations) in addition to the topic of religion in general, the Muslim community and the non-occurrence of segregation, reflect

their position as subtopics or references in that they are more likely to constitute part of an article rather than its substance. This is also the case for topics such as relations with the host community, cultural differences and conflict between Muslims which also have a low occurrence. The qualitative data reveals how these topics are more likely to be key discourses relating to topics on Islam. The visibility of the Muslim Parliament has faded somewhat but it has been found to be used as a source of Muslim comment in the qualitative research. Articles focusing on mainly facts about Islam are more likely to be applied generally rather than to Muslims within a particular location so would have been removed on initial analysis.

Newspaper differentiation: (see Appendix I for a full breakdown).

The consistency between the papers in giving visibility to certain topics in relation to Islam, despite their differing political perspectives, is characteristic of the limited framework (as well as news gathering techniques). However, *The Times*' framework is narrower, bringing attention to fewer topics. *The Guardian* exhibits a more open perspective in its attention to general beliefs and practice in the community, with reference to mosques, food, gender, relations to other religions, ethnic minorities, practices of Islamophobia, racism and anti-racism. However, *The Guardian* also pays equal attention, if not more, to traditionally negative topics such as criminal activity and unrest. Neither paper devotes much space to addressing discrimination against Muslims. This is likely to be based on a grounding in a race relations paradigm whereby discrimination is defined and identified on the basis of race. There are examples of the application of general news values by the papers such as *The Guardian*'s attention to the media. *The Times* is more likely to compare Islam with Christianity than other religions as *The Guardian* does. Its flurry of interest in Prince Charles in 1996 also reflects the close association of debates about Christianity to him in this year. The higher occurrence of articles on Prince Charles in 1994 in *The Guardian* is explained by their framing with religion in more general terms. Overall though, 'Prince Charles' is the only topic which appears to be carried more often by *The Times*, again reflecting its establishment position. These articles coincide with speeches Prince Charles made on the attractive features of Islam in this period of time, which the paper covered mainly to criticise.

However, articles about freedom of speech in this period are of slightly more importance to *The Times* (this is seen as a traditionally liberal debate). Articles on Rushdie

drop off in 1996 but subsequent (qualitative) research shows their re-emergence based on events. After further examination, the data also revealed that whilst the papers have a similar emphasis, the importance assigned to topics varies slightly. For example, whilst both papers associate the increase in Islamic fundamentalists with slack immigration policies, *The Guardian* (1995) highlighted Islamic fundamentalism with immigration as a subtopic and *The Times* gave prominence to immigration with Islamic fundamentalism a result of this. This reflects their differing ideologies and priorities for discussion.

Subjects previously found to be dominant in association with minorities such as criminal activity continue to grow. As does Muslims' involvement in politics. This may be taken as a positive sign, representing Muslims' increased involvement in the public sphere. However, an examination of the combination of topics shows Muslims' involvement in politics occurring chiefly with criminal activity (also increasing) and therefore throws an entirely different light on the subject. This is why an examination of the combinations of topics with subtopics and references is a necessity, in order to establish the way this material is being framed and presented. A positive finding is the lack of stories blatantly ridiculing Islam. However, this type of story is more common in a tabloid format which can be more explicit. The conveyance of ideology tends to be more subtle in the broadsheets.

The continued attention to these topics precludes attention to others, made explicit by the frequency of articles occurring in the category of 'Other', 2.3%. Another category which might suggest that Islam occurs within a wider framework is that of 'Normal' stories, for which there are none. However, this could also be representative of a movement away from labelling people when religion and race is irrelevant to the article.¹⁷ These results, then, are a clear indication of the restrictive frameworks that have developed in relation to the reporting of Islam. Once frameworks such as these have been established, it requires more effort to include different topics, to think about Islam in a different way.

Before examining how the dominant topics are framed, I will firstly show how topics are most likely to be framed in general by analysing the most frequently occurring subtopics and references.

¹⁷ It is also the consequence of this coding frame which only identifies articles where 'Muslim' is mentioned. It is matter for further analysis to establish the type of stories about Muslims where their religion is not specified.

Subtopics

Subtopics are those subjects which occur in combination with main topics within an article but have a secondary focus. Significant subtopics include:

Religion in general	57 articles	6.8%
Criminal Activity	50 articles	6%
Relations to Christianity	50 articles	6%
Religious ritual/ belief	49 articles	5.9%
Racism/ discrimination	41 articles	4.9%
Islamic fundamentalism	39 articles	4.7%
Muslim community	36 articles	4.3%
Gender	33 articles	3.9%
Relations to other religions	30 articles	3.6%
Segregation/ unity	28 articles	3.3%
Adjustment to culture	28 articles	3.3%

The findings show that topics are likely to be structured within a general framework including religion in general, belief and the Muslim community. Some of these subtopics have a narrow framework and occur only with a few main topics, for example, religion and segregation which occur mainly with Education (stories on Religious Education and separate schooling) and Prince Charles. Others are widely spread amongst main topics such as belief and the Muslim community. This may be of concern in providing evidence of blame discourse where the Muslim community are associated with negative topics or Islamic belief is given as an explanatory factor. However, the occurrence of discrimination here shows a recognition of the growing concern about attitudes towards Muslims.

The continued prominence of criminal activity and fundamentalism reflects a differing degree of emphasis in stories. These subjects show a degree of interchangeability as both topics and subtopics (in terms of emphasis depending on the story and paper). Other topics such as Prince Charles occur almost solely as a main topic.

The occurrence of relations to other religions and Christianity reveals a comparative framework for discussing Islam (also widely spread across topics). What appears to be developing overall is a general concern with the non-assimilation of Muslims in Britain.

The variations in occurrence over the time period parallels the event-centred patterns of coverage of topics in a logical pattern whereby certain subtopics are associated with certain topics. For example, conversion is higher in 1995 alongside relationships as a main topic following the conversion of Jemima Khan. Religion is higher in 1994 when debate about Religious Education reforms took place. In 1996 education is mainly

associated with segregation as a subtopic as the debate shifts to discuss separate schooling. This pattern also follows a logical order in relation to the frequency of main topics occurring in the different papers. Again, *The Guardian* has a wider framework of coverage. This results in a situation whereby it may include more articles on a subject but the same subject accounts for a greater percentage of *The Times* articles, as with criminal activity and Islamic fundamentalism. The only subtopic which recurs more often in *The Times* is relations to Christianity, again reinforcing its more traditional, establishment position. *The Guardian* continues to show a far greater emphasis on discrimination (31 articles to 10). This is of particular prominence in *The Observer* where it occurs as the principal subtopic. This is in contrast to the main subtopic occurring in *The Guardian*; criminal activity. Other differences reflect the patterns of prominent subtopics with *The Guardian* paying more attention to subjects on culture and belief and other religions and ethnic minority groups. Again, it shows a higher degree of interest in the media and gender but also unrest (although I cannot say how this is framed here). *The Times* pays slightly more attention to Rushdie reflecting its coverage of freedom of speech as a main topic. Articles on Islamophobia do not occur in *The Sunday Times* at all, as a main or subtopic.

In general subtopics are more evenly spread than topics, with most categories appearing in at least 10 articles. The occurrence of only 3 articles in the 'Other' category, 0.4%, and 4 'normal' news stories (occurring equally in both papers) strengthens the notion of a framework of reporting on British Islam.

References

References are secondary topics which are referred to in articles on Islam in Britain. Two references were coded for each article in order of prominence within it (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: References most frequently occurring in articles in relation to Islam.

Reference	Reference 1	Reference 2	Total Occurrence
World Affairs	101	55	156
Belief	58	49	107
Muslim community	52	50	102
Government	45	49	94
Adjustment to culture	45	52	97
Not applicable	43	169	212
Relations to Christianity	41	18	59
Racism	40	31	71
Political Activism	36	30	66
Cultural Atrocities	32	30	62

All these subjects occur more frequently as references (in combination) than topics and subtopics. From this, it becomes evident what sort of subjects take on the main focus of debate and which are used to frame it. These findings show how articles discussing British Islam will frequently refer to world events, reflecting the idea of Islam as a world-wide (and possibly a uniform) phenomenon. However, this association also promotes ideas of not-belonging, allowing questions about loyalty to be raised, thus working to accentuate difference. Similarly to their use as subtopics, belief and the Muslim community are implicated, offering 'an explanation' for the topics they appear with (widely spread across topics). However, the presence of the Muslim community may also be a result of the increasing politicisation of Muslims. The presence of government also implies the necessity for government intervention when dealing with British Islam which needs to be managed (allowing prejudicial practices to continue). Again, a comparative framework is established with relations to Christianity. The presence of 'not applicable', increasing as Reference 2, is illustrative of the simplified presentation of issues relating to Islam, that they require discussion within the bounds of two to three concerns (25% of articles). It also provides some idea of the length of articles. Again, the identification of discrimination towards the community is a positive aspect of coverage. However, the concern over the ability of the community to adjust culturally and cultural atrocities committed outweighs this. These types of negative subjects are occurring more as ways of framing Islam. For example, by referring to anti-Jewish sentiments (26 times) and the Nation of Islam (23 times) in relation to subjects on British Islam, a negative picture emerges.¹⁸ This shows why it is necessary to examine the way topics are framed; to gain an understanding of the meanings and connotations applied to Islam in the British press. All references included on the coding schedule occur in an article with only a few appearing in less than ten, including food and population. The number of 'Other' references occurring (10) and the amount of 'not applicable' (212) suggests that there are few alternative issues which can be discussed in association with British Islam, tightening the news frameworks further.

Table 3.9 shows how references are most likely to occur together (others, such as racism, have a wider framework). The indications are as have previously been identified: Islam is presented within a global context; a comparative framework; that the culture, belief

¹⁸ The Nation of Islam has been presented negatively in the press as an intolerant, extremist militant black group which incorporates both stereotypes about Muslims and young black men.

and practices of Muslims are to blame for their inability or difficulties in assimilating in the UK, and that they also cause problems for other more peaceful groups in this country.

Table 3.9: References consistently occurring together.

REFERENCE 1	REFERENCE 2
World Affairs	Government
Relations with Christianity	Relations with other religions
Conversion	Adjustment to culture
Belief	Adjustment to culture
Relations with Christianity	Belief
Offence caused to religious groups	Belief

An examination of the references occurring over the three year period shows a consistency in those used and how often. This further strengthens the argument that whilst events relating to British Islam change to some extent, and this is reflected somewhat in the news, they will then be framed in a very similar way.

The same patterns of difference exists between the papers, although there is more consistency in their use of references than topics. The main difference is again *The Guardian*'s wider frameworks and volume of articles with attention to discrimination and gender issues, reflecting its more liberal stance and *The Times*' comparisons with Christianity. *The Guardian* makes more reference to the community itself (36: 9 articles in *The Times*). *The Times* also shows considerably more interest in East/West relations, perhaps making more of 'the clash of civilisations' than *The Guardian*. Belief has a higher occurrence in the Sundays, most probably due to the more feature based nature of the weekend press. *The Sunday Times* allocates more space to cultural atrocities than any other paper (double the amount of *The Observer*).

Whilst this examination of topics, subtopics and references provides an idea of the content of articles on British Islam, a deeper analysis of how these are framed together will provide a clearer picture. To do this, I will examine how the most frequently occurring topics are framed. Many of the topics occurring as articles on British Islam, identified by the coding schedule and confirmed by the findings, represent a shift in concern from attitudes towards global Islam to concerns closer to home. What is represented then, is a mixture of anxieties stemming from ideas about a world-wide Islamic movement with general unease about minority groups at home. Islam's representation as a resurgent, fundamental global force alongside what is seen to be a number of separatist communities holding on and

strengthening traditional values, making demands on the host nation, is represented in the topics occurring here. These topics represent integrative concerns whereby the threat to the traditional values of the nation state seem to be at stake. These concerns are combined with an image of a more menacing threat to security from the outsiders within and are framed or underlined by deviancy, sealing the representation in a neat, unambiguous package.

Education

Education in particular has become the focus of widely shared anxieties both amongst Muslims and non-Muslims. Seen as vitally important in the transmission or inculcation of values from generation to generation, it has become the site of struggle between competing interest groups seeking to have an influence on the curriculum. Pushed onto the agenda by all sides in the 1980s; Muslim groups through their growing dissatisfaction with the system and increasing politicisation, liberal groups through multiculturalism and anti-racist policies, and conservative groups as a reaction to and in an attempt to defend tradition against this challenge. van Dijk's (1991) analysis of ethnic minority representation in the UK press (1989) found a shift in coverage, with education becoming a major subject in relation to Muslims. Previously, a marginal subject in relation to minority groups, as their disadvantage within the system was ignored, education exploded onto the agenda following the Honeyford affair in 1985. van Dijk (1991) found that these articles were almost exclusively discussed in terms of Islamic practices.

In total, education is a topic of concern in 184 of articles on British Islam, almost a quarter, 22%. Table 3.10 shows how these articles are framed. Almost a quarter of them, 43 articles or 23%, are about the nature and role of Religious Education in schools. These occurred mainly in 1994 following reforms by the then Conservative government to ensure teaching was broadly Christian in character, likewise daily worship. This caused a flurry of debate in the press and as is evident from Table 3.10, was represented within a comparative framework, both with Christianity and other religions. Other curriculum concerns in this year were sex education, dance and music as part of the national curriculum which led to some withdrawals from lessons by Muslim parents. A further 25 articles about education were about the funding of Muslim schools in Britain, 13.5%. These occurred mainly in 1996 although 1994 also saw some discussion over whether opting out and becoming grant-maintained was an option for Muslim schools. The move from discussion relating to

provision within the mainstream system to separate provision marks an important shift in the strength and identity of Muslim communities in the UK, alongside a recognition that the system already in place, based on multicultural policies, was not working. Muslim groups have campaigned consistently for state support for Muslim schools on the basis that Anglican, Catholic and Jewish religious schools receive funding. The debate is symptomatic of the idea that giving Islam equal status to Christianity is a contentious issue and whilst government rhetoric supports the idea of multiculturalism, this issue is represented as a problem for British society. Christianity is discussed within these articles on education and Islam 49 times (38%) showing how the debates will often come back to the values of the majority culture. Out of all the articles on British Islam, Christianity is referred to 137 times, in 16% of all articles, further illustrating this point.

Belief is also prevalent in relation to these articles (26%). It is evident that such discussion will refer back to belief (of Muslims) which is seen to be the basis from which the dispute is driven. The problematisation of this issue results in the problematisation of the Other's beliefs depending on the ideological position of the paper. The presence of adjustment to culture implies that these problems may also be caused by Muslims' difficulties in adjusting to the values of British society. Both subtopics suggest that the blame lies with Muslims' beliefs and culture and ability to fit in. An example of a story which had a high profile at the end of 1995 and beginning of 1996 was the 'outburst' of a Muslim teacher who disrupted his school's assembly, shouting at Muslim children for singing Christmas carols. Coverage concentrated on the upset caused to the 'innocent victims' of this 'senseless' attack.

The position of these subjects in the structure of the article is also significant. Relations to Christianity is more likely to be forefronted whilst belief and relations to other religions come secondary to that. This reflects the position of Christianity in Religious Education in schools and how this will be affected by teaching about a wider diversity of faiths. Education has a fairly tight structure and framework of reference. For example, education and its relation to religion, Christianity, and segregation, always appears as a main topic with the others as subtopics except once. In relation to Islamic fundamentalism, education always appears as a subtopic except once. When education appears in an article where the focus is Islam then, the form has become predictable, consistent and restricted within the framework presented here.

There is space for some more open debate; racism, equal opportunities and offence caused to other religions in education appear in addition to the problems for female Muslims in mixed schools. However, it is not possible to show here whether the beliefs of Muslims are seen to be causing the problems (and offence) or it is the beliefs and policies which are affecting Muslims. All these categories, except offence caused to other religions which is spread across papers, appear only in *The Guardian* which is illustrative of its wider framework. However, discussion of education in these terms is minimal; *The Times* and both Sunday papers' education articles are strongly confined within the main areas of Religious Education, separate schooling and relations to Christianity.

The consistency with which world affairs, the government, political activism and the Muslim community are referred to with all subjects demonstrates their considered importance when discussing Islam in Britain. The presence of world affairs as a reference, is most likely to be linked to the role of political activism (fundamentalism) in education and the funding of Muslim schools in the UK by other countries, e.g. Saudi support for Islamia school, London. This has the effect of conveying Islamic movements elsewhere as making threats upon, impinging and infiltrating Britain's sacred institutions.

Table 3.10: The framing of articles on education.

TOPIC	F*	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Education	128	Religion	43	Relations to Christianity	25
		Segregation	25	Belief	14
		Relations to Christianity	12	not applicable	10
		Relations to other religions	6	Government	9
		Muslim community	5	Political Activism/fundamentalism	7
		Gender issues	5	Adjustment to culture	6
		Racism	3	World Affairs	6
				Relations to other religions	6
				Equal opportunities	5
				Racism	5
				Gender	4
				Offence caused to other religions	3
				World Affairs	3

* Frequency

Relationships

The relationships of British Muslims are featured (in total appearing in 111 articles, 13%) on the following terms: that a British person converts to marry a Muslim, particularly if these people are in the public eye, or that there is some kind of deviant, culturally abominable or criminal action related to the relationship. Criminality is more significant in the coverage of personal relationships than any other subject, occurring 21 times (counting criminality as a main topic and relationship as a subtopic also). This perpetuates the idea that Muslim law and practice is deviant in its difference from British values and customs, for example, in the practice of underage marriage for girls. Thus, the purpose of articles on relationships is to emphasise cultural difference. The association with conversion then secures the cultural threat.

An illustration of the type of stories covered include: the conversion of Jemima Goldsmith to Islam in order to marry Imran Khan, 1995; the conversion of schoolgirl Sarah Cook after a holiday in Turkey, 1996, and recurrent stories of British women who marry Muslim men and then have to 'escape' from their brutality (coverage of abduction cases can be a consequence of this). British people who convert to Islam are often viewed with a mix of curious fascination and incomprehension. The required adjustment to a new way of life and redefinition of identity is a curiosity to the British press. These stories are framed in a way that implies the inevitable doom of the relationship. However, British usually means 'white'. Black British (African-Caribbean) conversions are not newsworthy despite the fact that they account for over half of the converts to Islam in Britain (Nielsen, 1991b). Although the subject of conversion only appears explicitly with the subject of relationships 23 times out of the 111 articles on relationships, (20.7%), once a couple becomes newsworthy for this reason, their activities tend to remain in the public eye for some time. Conversion is then often not explicitly referred to but is the reason for the news story in the first place. As a subject, it is referred to in a total of 79 articles, (9.4%). Halliday (1995/6) has previously argued that the concentration on conversion by the press is alarmist in trying to provoke fears about an expansionist force. However, I have found no explicit association with the rise of Islam and conversion (although it may be inferred). Any focus on numbers and population growth is low in general in this analysis over this period of time. Any possible threat of this kind is nullified by the press through derision and scepticism towards

the converted (even *The Guardian* has three stories mocking conversions based on relationships).

The way these relationships are seen as problematic is illustrated by the frequent references to the need to adjust to a different culture, occurring in 24 of the articles (21.6%), and to the cultural differences or even atrocities that occur in these relationships, a reference to how women are treated in Islam, occurring in 16 of the articles, (14.4%). Belief recurs again indicating that this is behind these actions (Table 3.11).

The inclusion here of politics relates to Imran Khan's new found political career in Pakistan. It is further evidence of the press having 'ideological scripts' about topics and people so that even when stories are about different issues, they are related to the same recurring associations (his relationship with Jemima and her conversion).

The variation of articles on relationships over time again depends on events occurring which fit into this framework. In 1995 articles relating to conversion are more frequent due to the conversion of Jemima Goldsmith. In 1996 articles relating to criminal activity increase due to the illegal religious marriage of Sarah Cook and Musa Komeagac in Turkey.

Table 3.11: The framing of articles on British Muslims' relationships.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Marriage/relationships	60	Criminal activity	12	Adjustment to culture	14
		Involvement in politics	6	Conversion	8
		Gender issues	6	Cultural atrocities/ Islamic law	5
		Conversion	6	East/West relations	4
		Adjustment to culture	4	Belief	4
		Belief	4	Gender	3
		Cultural/ legal differences	4		

Differences between papers are also limited although more diverse than articles on education. In each paper, articles on relationships occur with just 10 other subjects except *The Observer*, for which there occurs only 3. Whilst the emphasis is as described here in all papers, there is slightly more emphasis on conversion and all articles on gender appear in *The Guardian* (due to its feminist/human rights stance?). A few more articles appear on criminality in *The Times*. It is also more likely to highlight cultural difference, work within a

comparative framework (with Christianity and other religions) and feature conflict between Muslims.

Islamic fundamentalism

This topic has relevance, and as a result, presence due to its high media profile in terms of foreign news. These stories usually occur following an international event which provokes press speculation on the Islamic fundamentalist presence in the UK (see Table 3.12 for its association with world affairs in 51% of articles). This could, to some extent, be seen as a recognition of the world-wide community, the *umma*, and a reflection of the problem of the reconciliation of the multiple identities and loyalties that transcend national boundaries. Consequently, this subject is frequently linked to immigration due to concerns regarding legal dissidents (mainly Arabs, members of Hizb ut Tahrir or Hamas) and their activities, who take refuge in Britain and are the focus of these articles (consistent throughout the time period). The Government is also a key player here as they attempt to deal with the 'problem'.

The association with education is based chiefly on events in 1995 when Islamic fundamentalist groups began activities in Britain's universities. This topic has moved off the agenda in later years as global events have increased the coherence of the dissident framework. Dissident activities are linked to deviancy (through crime), the Muslim community in general and their role in aiding fundamentalists (in 25% of articles), (also having a homogenising effect). The association of fundamentalism with the Muslim Parliament and Islamic Committees similarly links extremists to non-extremist groups. Belief and cultural differences again act as explanatory factors. These stories represent Islam as a global threat to security, fundamentalists in the UK being the political and physical threat within. In addition, fundamentalists are seen to be intolerant through antagonism to other groups (religions), as illustrated by Table 3.12 (21% of articles).

Islamic fundamentalism occurs equally as a subtopic with Immigration as the main topic (11 times, 19%. 73% of these articles appear in 1995. In 1996 the split is equal, with each appearing 5 times). This is illustrative of the narrow framework within which these subjects are discussed (in relation to Islam), in that if one is raised, it is highly likely that the other will be referred to. Immigration has its highest occurrence in 1995 generally and is also frequently related to difficulties in adjusting to British culture. The shift from seeing minorities as immigrants to labelling foreign dissidents as immigrants is an indicator of

changes in the perception of minorities, recognising that they can no longer be defined in these terms. This accounts for the lower occurrence of the subject of immigration than has been found in previous research where it has tended to predominate (Hartmann et al, 1974; Troyna, 1981; van Dijk, 1991). The preoccupation in these articles appears not to be as with the previous decades, on the mass migration of peoples and prevention measures, but concerns with the assimilation of those residing within (recognising their permanent settlement). However, the presence of Islamic fundamentalists has allowed the issue of immigration to re-emerge acceptably, given their imagined security threat.

Immigration, when it appears as a main topic, has a similarly limited framework to that of fundamentalism (Table 3.13). *The Times* places slightly more emphasis on this along with subjects with other negative connotations such as crime, cultural differences and the Muslim Parliament (extremism). This is consistent with previous research that shows *The Times* to be more obsessed with numbers in general (Hartmann et al, 1974). However, as previously identified, categories such as the rise of Islam and population are limited in this coverage and are more likely to be an issue of concern in *The Guardian*. It is clear that these anxieties in relation to Islam are being expressed in different ways. *The Guardian*, whilst having an equally restrictive framework, illuminates issues of health and racism along with immigration. Other references are similar to those that appear with fundamentalism, given the likelihood that fundamentalism and immigration often appear together. The rise of Islam is an issue, political activism, the Muslim community, relationships and belief. However, there is also reference to Islamophobia and deprivation suffered.

The same pattern is apparent for articles on peaceful protests (which generally involve rallies planned by fundamentalists in the UK, e.g. The Kalifan 1994, Hizb ut Tahrir, 1995). In 7 out of 13 articles where the main topic is a protest, the subtopic is fundamentalism. The limited number of subjects occurring in combination with fundamentalism is evidence of the news framework which has been established for this topic. Fundamentalism as a main topic appears with few subjects other than those mentioned here. Those that do, have negative connotations. In *The Guardian*, for example, it is also associated with the rise of Islam, conflict between Muslims and unrest. *The Times*, again, has a slightly narrower framework but the topic of fundamentalism also occurs with unrest and gender. The rare occurrence of gender issues in *The Times* appears in an article on fundamentalism. This is an indication of the negative presentation of the treatment of

women in Islam by this paper. Other references occurring are equally negative; cultural atrocities, anti-Western sentiments, the growth of Islam, tension with the authorities, population, East/West relations. This results in a negative association with and consequences of Islamic fundamentalism infiltrating from abroad into the UK, the invasion of British culture by extremist tendencies.

However, in the structure of the article, fundamentalism is more interchangeable than, for example, education. It also occurs frequently as a subtopic or reference (occurring in total in 162 articles, 19%)(see Appendix h). This is an illustration of the close association of fundamentalism and extremism with Islam across a range of issues.

Table 3.12: The framing of Islamic Fundamentalism in the UK.

TOPIC F	SUBTOPIC F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Islamic Fundamentalism 57	Immigration 12	World Affairs 22	Government 10
	Education 11	Government 6	World Affairs 7
	Criminal activity 5	Racism 4	Offence caused to other religions 6
	Peaceful Protest 5	Anti-Jewish sentiment 3	Muslim community 6
	Muslim community 5	Muslim community 3	Islamic committees 5
	Islamophobia 4	Islamic committees 3	Racism 4
	Belief 3	Muslim Parliament 2	Satanic Verses 3
	Adjustment to culture 3	Adjustment to culture 2	Anti-Jewish sentiment 3

Table 3.13: The framing of immigration in relation to British Muslims.

TOPIC F	SUBTOPIC F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Immigration 25	Islamic Fundamentalism 11	World Affairs 11	Government 8
		Government 10	World Affairs 5

Political activity

This subject also represents a shift in the representation of ethnic minorities in recognition of their increasing presence in the public sphere. The long struggle to be represented politically for Muslims, and other groups, has led to coverage of their campaigns for selection for candidacy, represented within a competitive framework. However, what is evident from Table 3.14 is what could have been an opportunity for more open and positive coverage has mainly been framed through criminality (24% of articles). This insinuates that when Muslims are involved in politics, illegal activity takes place. It also illustrates the tendency to undermine the few Muslim politicians that there are in Britain.

The central focus of these articles is corruption in politics, with accusations of bribery and vote-rigging associated with the by-election involving the first Muslim MP in Govan, Scotland, 1995 and consequential activities, 1996. The low occurrence in 1994 indicates that the political activity of Muslims has little news value unless it shows them in negative activities and gaining some degree of power (a possible reason for the negative framing). In these articles, Muslims are often shown in conflict with other groups and individuals as internal disagreements arose over candidates (for selection to represent the community).¹⁹ The presence of government represents Muslim efforts to form a group with which the Government can or will negotiate. The links to the Muslim community in 28% of articles implicates their involvement. The entry of a Muslim MP into the political arena has been closely followed by the British quality press and has continued to be newsworthy up to the present day. The high occurrence of 'not applicable' here indicates the closure of the subject around these issues. Politics, however, is also linked to racism, 13 times (24%) although it is not possible to say who is participating in racism (Muslims or non-Muslims) at this point of the analysis. Some of these stories did arise due to controversy over Muslim applications to join the Labour Party which led to accusations of racism against the Party.

Significantly, although politics is associated with a wider range of subjects than others so far, these subjects are concentrated around 'ethnic/race issues': racism, gender, conversion, marriage; stories about Muslim candidates aiding the community on these issues. This verifies arguments that contend that minorities are not shown to be speaking on or represented in relation to everyday concerns such as economics. The low occurrence of government here shows the localised and 'unofficial' associations rather than the national or legitimate politics of the country.

The association with world affairs allows questions to be raised regarding Muslims' motives for political actions, their loyalty to Britain, as well as foreign political practices being transferred to Britain. Political activism (mainly represented as fundamentalism) is an indication of the sort of extremist politics Muslims are shown to be involved in. This topic represents Muslims as deviant and extreme, in conflict with other groups for political power and concerned only with minority interests.

¹⁹ The theme of Muslim disunity is a popular press discourse examined in further detail in the following chapter.

Table 3.14: The framing of Muslims' political activities in the UK.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
Involvement in politics	54	Criminal activity	13	not applicable	7	not applicable	17
		Muslim community	11	Racism	4	Political Activism/ Fundamentalism	4
		Racism	5	Gender	4	Adjustment to culture	4
		Conversion	5	World Affairs	4	Racism	4
		Marriage	4	Political Activism/ Fundamentalism	4	Gender	4
		Anti-racism	3	Ethnic minority	4	World Affairs	3
				Muslim community	4	Conversion	3
						Muslim community	3
						Government	3

Politics is more significant as a main topic, an indication of its central place for media interest. Politics always has a high news value, the involvement of scandal and a novel element such as the first Muslim MP increases its salience. Media celebrities have a high news value and the marriage of Imran Khan, a popular sportsman, and Jemima Goldsmith, an archetypal Western beauty and daughter of a billionaire businessman of Jewish descent, who hence converts to Islam, has many elements of interest to the press. The press' articles on Khan's political career in Pakistan which refer back to his marriage and the issues surrounding it is evidence of the framework which has evolved.

This framework applies quite rigidly to all papers, except *The Guardian* again has a slightly wider framework. All other subtopics appearing in *The Times* have negative connotations including anti-Western sentiments and conflict between Muslims. *The Times* includes slightly more articles where the Muslim community and relationships are subtopics whilst *The Guardian* runs all articles on racism, gender and most of those on anti-racism.

Criminal activity

Crime, like politics, has a high news value, particularly in relation to minority groups (Hartmann et al, 1974; Troyna, 1981; van Dijk, 1991). Events where Muslims are involved in criminal behaviour rather than regular activities, therefore, have a higher probability of making the news. Every-day activities such as having relationships, and the media (programmes about) become more newsworthy if crime is involved. The deviancy of British Muslims is represented by criminality and suggests that they are a threat. Muslims are

associated with criminal behaviour in 93 articles, (11%). The connection here between crime, relationships and cultural atrocities gives the impression that the Islamic law that governs relationships leads to illegal activity and what may be judged atrocities by Western standards (Table 3.15). This combination occurs partly as a result of the illegal religious marriage of a 12 year old British girl to a Turkish Muslim in 1996 (accounting for the high frequency in this year). Again, belief becomes the driving force and adjustment to culture is seen as a problem for the Muslim community that results in deviant behaviour. To quote Gilroy (1988: 54), the criminal subculture of a group is seen to 'violate the laws and customs which express the civilisation of the national community and in doing so provide powerful symbols which express black difference as a whole. To be a criminal is to fulfil cultural destiny'. The representation of Islamic fundamentalism and Mohammed Sarwar, Britain's first Muslim MP, similarly expresses this criminal culture (see Chapter 4).

This data demonstrates that although Muslims as a minority group are similarly associated with crime, the type of crime is unlike that of black groups. Occurring largely as a subtopic, the criminal activity of Muslims is represented in relation to their deviant relationships and political activities (fraud, bribery). There are few images of the stereotypical violent street crimes traditionally applied to black people. This is partly due to particular stereotypes applied to Asians (which constitute the main body of representations of British Muslims), equally on a world-wide scale (corruption in politics, for example, in Pakistan) and those stereotypes associated with Muslims, arising from Orientalism (such as sexual deviancy).

A comparison of Muslim criminality to instances of white hostility (racism and Islamophobia) gives an idea of the marginal coverage of attacks on Muslims compared to their deviance (3.5 articles to 1) (and this is not accounting for all the articles where crime is a subtopic).

Riots do not figure highly in relation to Muslims over this period of time. Despite The Bradford riots in 1995, where an increase in coverage is noted, these events were mainly discussed within a racial paradigm. However, those articles that do appear are framed by criminal deviance (47%) or a framework of cultural difference (40%). However, there does appear to have been a shift from traditional ways of representing riots (as in Cohen, 1980 and Solomos, 1989) to greater exploration of the reasons for their occurrence in terms of racism and cultural alienation. Again, it is not possible to elaborate on this

without qualitative analysis and comparisons to more general coverage of riots. These articles also have a lower visibility than those which express the deviancy of Muslims.

The occurrence of criminal activity with various subtopics (an additional 13) illustrates the tendency to associate Muslims with crime. Both papers have a similar emphasis on the principal subjects associated with criminality. The Sundays have an extremely narrow framework of 3 subjects each. All the articles on criminal activity and the media occur in *The Guardian*. *The Times*' association of this topic with gender represents again how gender issues and Islam are treated in *The Times* (also in *The Guardian* here). This is consistent with the findings of previous studies which show that liberal newspapers do not necessarily report less on crime (van Dijk, 1991). It should, however, be noted that some of these articles concern Muslims actions against crime, for example on prostitutes, 1994, although only a small amount.

Table 3.15: The framing of Muslims' criminal activities in the UK.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
Criminal Activity	43	Relationships	9	Cultural Atrocities	7	not applicable	10
		Belief	7	Conversion	5	Adjustment to culture	5
		Media	4	Tension with authorities	4	Cultural Atrocities	4
		Islamic Fundamentalism	3	Political Activism/ Fundamentalism	3		

Muslims in the media

The inclusion of this topic is indicative of the changes in coverage on ethnic minorities. It is also illustrative of a growing tendency for media forms to comment on other media forms and the media in general. The coverage of Muslims and the media has a wider framework, occurring with a number of subtopics (21). The clustering of these topics, however, shows that articles appear to be framed in two main ways (Table 3.16). Articles either comment on racism in the media, the poor representation of ethnic groups on the media (racism, ethnic minorities, offence caused to other religions, Islamophobia, equal opportunities, relations to other religions), another example of a more open, positive move to represent minority disadvantage. Or, these articles seek to comment on the role of Muslims in trying to censor the media (articles on the Nation of Islam reflect these type of activities, indicative of the news value of more extremist versions of Islam). Since The Rushdie Affair, Muslims are frequently associated with censorship and issues of freedom of

speech, however, most articles dealing with this appear as main topics themselves (see p. 111). However, these are often referred to when other issues regarding the media and Muslims are discussed, an indication of the strength of this image, there is also an element of mockery here. The inclusion of conversion is related to both sort of subjects covered by the media (the focus of which the paper then runs a feature on, a regular practice in *The Guardian*) or is about a media worker's conversion, hence the adjustment to culture. Some of these articles feature problems faced by minorities working in the media, in particular women (hence gender), again representing a more open approach. Other examples of coverage include articles debating the nature and future of religious broadcasting and reports on research on minority media use.

Most of the coverage on media is in *The Guardian/Observer*, having 32 articles compared to *The Times/Sunday Times* 9, 8 of which appear in *The Sunday Times* (more feature-based). This means only 1 article appears in *The Times* in the three year period and this is about freedom of speech. The media is a focus of interest to *The Guardian* due to its liberal perspective which condemns censorship. This is a primary factor in its negative attitude towards Muslims when it is normally more sympathetic to minority groups (and accounts for its attention to discrimination here). It is particular critical of the activities of other media owners and managers due to its special status having a non-profit-making committee-based ownership.

Table 3.16: The framing of Muslims in the media.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
Media/	41	Racism/		Offence caused to		Not applicable	
Entertainment		discrimination	4	other religions	6		5
		Conversion	4	Nation of Islam	5	Freedom of speech	4
		Ethnic minorities	3	Racism	4	Adjustment to culture	4
		Mocking stories	3	Gender	3	Conversion	3
		Censorship	3	Belief	3	Nation of Islam	2
				Islamophobia	3	Racism	2
				World affairs	3	Gender	2
				Satanic Verses	2	Equal Opps	2
				Muslim community	2	Relations to other religions	2
						Satanic Verses	2

Prince Charles

Prince Charles' pronouncements on most subjects are newsworthy but his speeches on Islam have been of particular interest given his future role as Head of the Church of England and the press' fascination with the peculiarities of Islam. The subjects associated with Charles are mainly based on an agenda he has set by his speeches; the relationships between religions, belief, the importance of understanding for East/West relations. However, the response to them is overwhelmingly negative. David Dimbleby's documentary on Prince Charles in 1994 which embraced a variety of topics was followed by press coverage of his remarks on his desire to be 'Defender of all faiths' in Britain. Particular attention was paid to his speech in December 1995 describing the attractive features of Islam, and in 1996 he supported funding for Muslim projects from the Millennium fund.

From the evidence here, comment on Prince Charles' opinions is most likely to occur in *The Times*. The references to cultural atrocities here is a reflection of the cynicism with which some commentators treat his ideas because of what they believe to be the real nature of Islam (expressed in terms of human rights abuses across the world). Since 1997 this topic has slipped off the agenda as Prince Charles has tried to improve his media image following the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales. The negativisation of Prince Charles through his speeches on Islam and his recent silence on the subject is an indication of the controversial nature of the subject.

This subject has been consistently presented within the narrow framework presented in Table 3.17. *The Times* has a slightly wider framework due to its greater interest in Royalty. Excluding this, coverage is very similar reflecting the focus of particular speeches and issues, visits etc. and their interpretations. Although Prince Charles is usually the main focus in these articles, his previous close association with Islam has been enough for him to be referred to when these issues appear as main topics (injecting the article with elitism and, at the time, increasing its negativity thus adding to its newsworthiness).

Table 3.17: The framing of Prince Charles and Islam.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
Prince Charles	41	Relations to Christianity	9	East/West relations	10	not applicable	10
		Belief	9	Relations with Christianity	5	East/West relations	5
		Relations with other religions	3	Relations with other religions	5	Cultural Atrocities	4
		Media	3	Muslim community	4	Relations with other religions	4

Belief and religious ritual

Articles on Islam are highly likely to make reference to the beliefs or religious practices of Muslims, in total they are referred to in 189 articles, the highest frequency of subject overall (see Appendix h). As this table shows, these are more likely to be referred to in relation to other main topics but do occur as the main thrust of the articles as well. This topic has a wide framework, being dispersed throughout a variety of subjects in both papers and equally across the years. It appears with 19 different subtopics in total which accounts for the limited frequencies in Table 3.18. Where the main discussion of an article is about British Muslims and their belief or rituals, it is likely that this will be within a comparative framework both to Christianity and other religious groups. It will often prompt a discussion on the ability of Muslims to adapt to the dominant culture of the host country. Further evidence of this is that when belief occurs as a reference, it occurs most frequently in combination with the references: adjustment to culture, in 11 articles; relations to Christianity, 11 articles, and offence caused to religious groups, 9 articles. This comparative aspect is more prominent in *The Times*' papers, particularly with Christianity.

Table 3.18: The framing of Islamic belief and practice in press articles.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Religious ritual/ Belief	33	Relations to Christianity	7	Muslim community	6
		Food	3	Adjustment to culture	3
		Relations to other religions	3	World affairs	3
		Cultural Differences	2	Cultural Atrocities	3
		Criminal Activity	2	Relations to Christianity	2
				Relations to other religions	2
					Muslim community 1

News in this category also consists of articles on pilgrimage, and food practices including ritual slaughter and government regulations relating to this. Both articles relating belief to criminal activity appear in *The Times*. Other references which occur with belief, including the rise of Islam, belief and practices around gender, political activism and world affairs, infer negative connotations of crude, uncultivated cultural practices (see cultural atrocities) being transferred to British society through migration. These articles appear on the basis that certain cultural practices can be shown to be barbaric and the people

practising them are polarised in terms of a negative value system. This illustrates the tendency of the press to use religious beliefs in Islam as a 'universal cover' (Halliday, 1995), as a key to understanding how Muslims behave in both social and political arenas. This is not usually the case with the majority of 'Christians' in this country except in the extreme.

Relations to Christianity

This topic appears within a similar framework to belief as their position in articles (as topics, subtopics and references) are fairly interchangeable. This topic occurs in a total of 137 articles, (16.3%), again mainly as a subtopic (50 times). This illustrates its role in framing debates about Islam comparatively. It is fairly evident that, from an ethnocentric perspective, issues about religions other than the established religion of the country will be discussed on these terms. It has a wide framework in both papers, being dispersed amongst 16 subtopics and having a consistency across the three years.

Islam's comparison to Christianity is also a context for comparing other religions and in relation to belief. These topics often occur together when a prominent person in the Church of England, (in these articles, chiefly the Archbishop of Canterbury), discusses religion and Christianity in relation to other religions and calls for increased tolerance both at home and abroad to improve East/West relations (accounting for both world affairs and Islamic fundamentalism which is seen as an intolerant face of religious belief. This requires educating people). Some of these articles reported British Muslims' reactions to the speeches of the Archbishop of Canterbury, made on his visit to the Sudan, 1994 and 1995, on the themes above. Other public figures are also newsworthy, particularly Prince Charles. This topic, in some instances, could be interpreted as having a positive message. However, the growth of Islam could be seen as threat to Christianity especially in its extreme form. This expansive force then, could be constructed as a threat to Christian values, and the call for tolerance a veiled call for assimilation. A qualitative analysis would be necessary to clarify this.

This comparative framework is reinforced by the occurrence of relations with Christianity as a reference. It is most likely to occur with the references: relations to other religions, 14 times, and belief, 11 times. Both belief and relations to Christianity have a slightly different focus as a subtopics, used as they are to frame main events. For example, relations to Christianity appears mainly with education and belief with criminal activity.

Table 3.19: The framing of British Islam in relation to Christianity.

TOPIC F	SUBTOPIC F	REFERENCE1 F	REFERENCE2 F
Relations to Christianity 28	Relations to other religions 7	Belief 5	not applicable 8
	Belief 5	World Affairs 5	Prince Charles 2
	Islamic fundamentalism 3	Equal opportunities tolerance 3	World Affairs 2
		not applicable 3	East/West relations 2
		Offence to other religions 2	Equal opportunities tolerance 2
		Growth of Islam 2	Adjustment to culture 2
		Islamic Law 2	Education 2

Freedom of speech/The Rushdie Affair

Although freedom of speech as a main topic occurs more frequently than articles on Rushdie due to its more general nature, they will be discussed together due to the frequency with which they appear conjointly in the press. The Rushdie Affair continues to be topical and associated with the British Muslim community. Eight years after the event, there were still 81 articles referring substantially to Rushdie over the three year period under review. What was most interesting about these was the frequency with which the debate about freedom of speech would be referred to in association with Rushdie. This occurred even in stories unconnected to British Islam. It is apparent that to some extent, The Rushdie Affair has come to symbolise the debate about freedom of speech in the press. In articles where the main topic is Rushdie (21), freedom of speech is the subtopic in 20 (95%). Where freedom of speech is the main topic of debate (28 articles), Rushdie is the subtopic in 15, (53.5%), occurring together in a total of 32 articles. This narrow framework is revealed by the few other topics associated with these subjects. Freedom of speech is linked to only 6 other topics, and Rushdie 4, 3 of these being the same. These are displayed fully in Tables 3.20 and 3.21. With freedom of speech, these include: conflict between Muslims, the Muslim community, criminal activity and Islamic fundamentalism. These relate to the involvement of Muslims in censorship activities through which they are judged to be extreme, even by the right-wing press (hypocritical given its usual moral stance on censorship, but in this instance, due to the specific content, it shifts the attention to the extreme activities of the victimised group). Articles on Rushdie have also focused on Islamic fundamentalism and criminal activity. An article appearing on his health may have the effect of inferring its deterioration due to the pressures put upon him by extremist

groups. The reference to political activism confirms the association with extremism. The link to the Muslim Parliament further reinforces this (being a more extreme source). Relations to Christianity refers to articles on the issue of blasphemy and whether laws should be extended to Muslims, another issue closely related to this topic since it first arose. The references Satanic Verses and freedom of speech also occur together 10 times.

In relation to this issue then, the Muslim community in Britain are discussed only through a highly consistent negative framework. Both of these negative subjects appear in both papers, *The Guardian's* framework being limited to the central issues in this instance. There is a slight difference between papers in which aspect of the issue they forefront. *The Guardian* is more likely to focus on Rushdie, subsequently raising the issue of freedom of speech. *The Times* pays more attention to issues of censorship, where Rushdie is then invoked. The attention to Rushdie was particularly high during 1994/1995 due to the 5th anniversary of the fatwa and a spate of action prompted by progressive trends towards European Union (prompting fears for his safety due to the increasing movement of peoples). Subsequently, freedom of speech becomes prominent as articles attend to other extremist groups and their activities whereby (their position on) Rushdie is referred to in the process (for example, al-Muhajiroun and their Rally for Revival).

The fact that Muslims are continually associated with the issue of freedom of speech (in a total of 71 articles, 8.4%) illustrates the considered threat from irrational, antiquated Muslims to British liberal values and democracy. The Rushdie Affair has become an ongoing news story due to the Iranian *fatwa* (religious decree) and as a result of this, relations with Iran. Debate throughout this period focused on the annual renewal of the fatwa and measures taken by the British government to pressurise Iran and support Rushdie (accounting for the prominence of which world affairs and government are related to this issue). Fifteen of the 21 articles on Rushdie refer to this issue (71%). Again, this suggests that the agenda of Muslims in Britain is being dictated by Muslims outside Britain, that Muslim (foreign) values are impinging on British society, as well as being a constant reminder of the global menace and Iranian terrorist threat. These images sustain and maintain ideas about extremist and fanatical Muslims in the public mind, with the goal of creating an Islamic theocracy in Britain, and marginalises the moderate and pragmatic stance of the majority of British Muslims.

van Dijk (1991) found, in his own research, that The Rushdie affair was significant in the late 1980s (along with education based on the Honeyford affair) in pushing Muslims to the forefront of ethnic minority coverage. Through this, a channel of news has been opened, with regard to Muslims, that can often be artificial. In his content analysis of five British newspapers' coverage of ethnic minorities in 1989, education and Rushdie were the two most prominent topics. He argues that this was also part of a negative shift in approaches to the reporting of ethnic minorities to 'affairs' or 'scandals' into which these events neatly fitted. A key aspect of this approach is the over-reporting of an event which symbolises a 'sudden national panic' (88). This takes place within general trends towards this type of coverage as commercial pressures increasingly prevail and the reporting of scandals becomes more attractive. The continuing coverage of Rushdie so long after the event is indicative of the 'panic cycle' which will become increasingly apparent in the qualitative analysis. The qualitative data (1997) and an ongoing monitoring of the papers used for this analysis (1998) provide evidence that anxiety about education and freedom of speech persists nearly ten years later. This represents unresolved anxieties and the continuing struggles of all groups to establish hegemony.

Table 3.20: The framing of the debate on freedom of speech in relation to British Muslims.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
Freedom of speech	28	Rushdie Affair	15	World Affairs	8	Government	6
		Media	4	Muslim Parliament	4	World Affairs	4
		Relations to Christianity	3	Offence caused to religious groups	4	Political activism/Fundamentalism	4
				Satanic Verses	3	Satanic Verses	4
				Relations to Christianity	3	Offence caused to religious groups	2
				Government	1	Relations to Christianity	1

Table 3.21: The framing of Salman Rushdie.

TOPIC	F	SUBTOPIC	F	REFERENCE1	F	REFERENCE2	F
The Rushdie Affair	21	Freedom of speech	17	World Affairs	11	Government	4
				Freedom of speech	3	World Affairs	4
				Government	2	Offence caused to religious groups	4
				Political activism	1	Political activism	2

Race relations

Although not a consistent topic in the representation of Muslims, I consider it of benefit to compare the frequency of articles which say something about the problems faced by the Muslim community to articles which are indicative of the problems they cause (evident from the analysis of the framing of articles). Taking the topics of racism, anti-racism, Islamophobia and deprivation, this results in 42 articles where one of these is the main issue, 5% of total articles. Ninety-two per cent of these articles (39) appear in *The Guardian/Observer*. There is some reference to these issues, however, a total of 240 times, (it is not possible to give a percentage of articles here as these references may occur within one article, however, 73% of these references appear in *The Guardian*, 176). Critical discussions of inequality are therefore severely limited in the quality press, particularly the right-wing. This bodes ominously for tabloid coverage. However, a qualitative analysis would be necessary to determine whether Muslims themselves are implied in their own deprivation. In fact, although racism is widely dispersed amongst topics, Islamophobia occurs mainly with Islamic fundamentalism. This implies that Islamophobia is a result of Islamic fundamentalism and can therefore be justified. Articles on anti-racism are frequently used by the right-wing press to attack their policies so cannot be assumed to be positive.

Taking articles which appear to show Muslims involved in daily activities similarly to the majority population, or normal concerns, topics include: health, business, sport and 'normal' news stories. This results in 49 articles where the main topic is one of these subjects, 6% of articles (58% of which appear in *The Guardian*). There are 108 references to these subjects in all articles, 65% of which appear in *The Guardian* (70). In the majority of articles then, events involving Muslims are selected and constructed to fit a prevailing image of them which highlights their problems assimilating and relating to mainstream society. There is little allusion to Muslims as part of the day to day lives of the majority, of the problems they face in their lack of facilities which are available to the wider public, of unemployment and deprivation despite constituting the group most likely to be living in poverty and disadvantage (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).²⁰ This is also illustrated by the topics selected for this analysis. Familiarity with the material found no need for categories on housing, unemployment and similar issues often selected for content analyses of ethnic

²⁰ This does reflect policy decisions in allocating services in terms of racial groups but the disadvantage this causes and protests Muslims make regarding this policy are not being attended to in press coverage.

minority coverage in the UK. Although scant coverage of these type of concerns have been found (Hartmann et al, 1974; Troyna, 1981; van Dijk, 1991), the total absence of reporting on them in relation to Muslims illustrates the differing associations made with Islam. An event or action has to be indicative of some kind of essential 'Muslimness', an idea of Islam, to be featured as such. This is illustrated more fully below.

Topical structures

In order to provide an idea of the news framework overall, Appendix h shows the frequency of which topics occur in total, in other words in their capacity as topic, subtopic and references. Topics are entered in order of overall frequency with the highest first. From this Table it is possible to identify where topics are most likely to appear in an article on British Islam, in other words, their position in the structure of the article. This identifies those topics which have their importance as main events and those that are used to frame them. Underlined are the highest frequencies in terms of where those topics are likely to appear in the structure of the article. The Table also shows the consistency of appearance of topics. This provides us with a clearer idea of the news framework which has developed on British Islam.

Topics which have a narrow framework; i.e. they frequently occur in a predictable and specific form include:

Education	Relationships	Rushdie
Prince Charles	Immigration	Freedom of speech

Accounts of these events seem to follow some kind of consensual ideological script in terms of how they will be presented in coverage.

Those subjects which can be described as diffuse categories, applying across subjects or events associated with Islam, tend to have wider frames of reference. These can be said to be part of the frame of references within which British Islam is discussed in these newspapers. Subjects falling within this category include:

Education²¹ which occurs with 78% of main topics,*
 Criminal Activity, 76%,
 Belief , 74%,

²¹ Education is a special case. It is both widely applied to a variety of issues in relation to Islam but is also highly likely to apply within a specific framework. It is therefore placed into both categories.

Gender and Muslim community, 69%,
Media and Islamic Fundamentalism, 64%,
Adjustment to culture, Racism and World Affairs, 62%,
Relations to other religions, 57%
Relations to Christianity and Government, 55%,
Cultural Atrocities, 50%.

*Does not include references the topic occurs with so there is potential for a more widespread application.

These topics then, are consistent in the framing of Islam, frequently referred to in articles on Islam and occur regardless of subject. This framework would have seemed even more restrictive had I only coded the two main topics in the article. Coding two further subthemes extended the framework but also revealed how tight this is in relation to the predominant topics, the references adding slight differences in focus. Particularly worrying is that crime is associated with 74% of subjects relating to British Islam. The connection with fundamentalism is also strong and confirms theories about images of Islam and their extremity. Crime, fundamentalism and cultural atrocities all symbolise deviant behaviour which appears to be based on Islamic beliefs (rather than customs). This takes place within a comparative framework, with the values and beliefs of majority Britain (often Christian), where difference is pronounced, creating problems for integration. Adjustment to culture and cultural atrocities reveals how these different values are framed, how often Islam is presented as an alien culture, in opposition to Western life.

The associations with the Muslim community and their beliefs may be an indication of blame discourse; that Muslims are to blame for their discrimination and deprivation due to their own antiquated practices. Ethnic blame discourse is defined by Romer et al (1998: 286/7) as 'ethnocentric bias in blaming 'outgroups' for social problems'. The authors' findings of a study of crime news in Philadelphia, which compared coverage to homicide statistics, suggests that the media engage in a discourse of ethnic blame that is independent of realistic group conflict.²² Their research also suggests that the media frames the behaviour of ethnic Others as intergroup conflict and accentuates the harmful effects for the in-group, also apparent in my findings. By focusing on the problems of the outgroup, the

²² Realistic group conflict theory postulates the argument that ethnic groups are more likely to be involved in crime due to their real deprivation and disadvantage which creates intergroup conflict which the media then reflects (Levine and Campbell, 1972).

discourse perpetuates the belief that they have interests and values that conflict with the in-group and can be blamed for these problems. This theory appears to be particularly applicable to the representation of Muslims in the UK with the emphasis on cultural differences, interpersonal relations, integrative concerns and deviancy. A clear example of this is the association of adjustment to culture with unrest. The implication being that Muslims' own difficulties in adjusting to life in the UK is causing unrest in Britain's towns and cities, a cause that has been seen much less prominently in previous content analyses of ethnic minority coverage. The subject of unrest, as has been found in previous research, is more likely to be related to criminal causes rather than deprivation (van Dijk, 1991).

The themes explicated here are demonstrated more effectively below by the clustering of topics, (informed by their framing), into their dominant symbolised meanings.

Topical clusters: Themes and meanings of British Islam

Those topics which are not numerically important are not insignificant. The content analysis that took place, based on topics rather than tone, allows for the identification of any 'central defining themes that might be taken as indicating the meaning and significance' given to Islam in the newspapers (Hartmann et al, 1974: 108). The combination of these topics creates particular meanings. Through a thorough analysis of these meanings, the main topics were found to be framed by a few important themes. They were therefore clustered into meta-categories based on the following themes:

1. That Muslims are a threat to security in the UK due to their involvement in deviant activities.
2. That Muslims are a threat to British 'mainstream' values and thus provoke integrative concerns.
3. That there are inherent cultural differences between Muslims and the host community which create tensions in interpersonal relations.
4. Muslims are increasingly making their presence felt in the public sphere.

Other categories identified as having some significance here are Race Relations and Belief. Appendix j shows the placing of topics into the categories (which shall be known as thematic discourse) in which they are most likely to be represented in the press (based on an examination of how they are framed). However, it is not possible to come up with entirely discrete categories, many of the topics have elements of more than one or all of the themes

running through their depiction. One of the problems with content analysis is its artificial fragmentary nature. These themes are actually interrelated in that the belief and practices lead to charges of cultural difference which present integrative concerns and may constitute a threat to the security of the country. This demonstrates the way that material on Islam is handled in the press and the degree of homogeneity applied to Muslims in Britain and across the world. It is also an indication of what these topics and articles symbolise. An example of this is the debate over freedom of speech and Rushdie which symbolises concerns regarding the conformity of Muslims within the UK and the threat from global Muslim forces. Relations between the host and Muslim community could be represented equally in all categories.

The public sphere has been identified as a separate category to show where Muslims are increasingly having an impact on public life in the UK. This raises questions about whether Islam is becoming more newsworthy or are Muslims increasingly able to set agendas as their public voice increases? Restriction in the public space led to politicisation. However, most of these topics are placed, foremostly, elsewhere due to their mainly negative framing. For example, the Muslim Parliament is an example of Muslims attempting to create a political space for themselves within the UK as a result of their exclusion from the wider political process. The framing of these stories, however, and their association with fundamentalism means it more than often symbolises a threat from within. Education, a concern of minorities which has been systematically ignored by the press in the past, is now firmly on the public agenda, substantially because of the activities of Muslims. However, again the framing has shown how often it is represented as an issue of integrative concern to the majority. Islam's ability to be newsworthy, then, appears to rely on established notions of who Muslims are and what they represent to British culture.

The purpose of this diagram is to show that although there are a (limited) number of topics associated with Islam, the way these topics are framed in the press shows that they are systematically associated with the same sort of meanings. These meanings, applied to events on British Islam, are extremely limited. What they amount to is a concentration on the negative consequences of the presence of Islam in the UK, (associated with the presence and infiltration of outsiders, extremists and through a negative evaluation of cultural differences), the result being crime and the demise of traditional values. Essentially, underlying all these themes is the reification of difference. It has been argued previously that

news about Islam has become more salient because of the increasingly cultural identification by selves and others (as both a defensive strategy and attempt to construct coherent identities, 'filtering out the threats in social experience', see Sennett, 1971, in Chp 1). This, however, has allowed a comparative framework to evolve whereby Muslims' differences are defined through deviancy to the norm, their cultural practices are interpreted as backward, based on archaic beliefs. These beliefs and practices are made to look strange in relation to the majority culture whilst the practices of the dominant groups are never discussed or challenged but presupposed. Within news coverage then, there exists underlying assumptions about the natural behaviour of homogenous polarised groups who in every instance encounter a conflict of interests. Even other ethnic groups are used as a contrast to the separatism of Muslims.

What is clear from this framework is that Islam in Britain is most likely to be reported if it clearly affects or is seen to impinge on the lives of what are considered 'normal' British people. Educational debate is extensive because the incorporation of other religions threatens the traditional Christian values of the country, having the potential to change them. The consistent association of British Islam with fundamentalism and criminal activity implies deviancy and a threat from within. These clusters illustrate the way Islam is understood across a variety of topics. Integrative concerns are established as more important than race relations when discussing Muslims in Britain. Although it is evident that Muslims are seen as a threat to security, this is not as dominant as the global image. Due to the local context, other issues take precedence. However, it does illustrate the strength of the image, that it has such currency on a local scale. A discourse of conflict, deviancy, difference and backwardness runs throughout these themes illustrating the closeness of the arguments relating to the global media image and a localised one. This is also due to the mixture of discourses relating to ethnic minority groups and Islam.

However, whilst most of the topics associated with British Islam show British customs, laws and institutions beset by corrosive alien forces, they also represent Muslims' engagement in a struggle for reform of the present institutional setting. There exists some space for oppositional work in particular in *The Guardian* where the Muslim perspective is able to emerge. These sites, where Muslims have entered the public sphere, are points of engagement for Muslims to work on, however, in this section I have only partly been able to

show how the media represents this struggle for reform within a wider hegemonic operation.

Despite the slight differences in topic coverage, there is little difference in the overall themes that are occurring between papers. What I have sought to illustrate here is that although the frequencies of topics occurring matter, it is how they occur together, how articles are framed, which really tells us something about images and meanings relating to British Islam in the press. These meanings will now be extended to look at other aspects of the representational framework.

The role of British Muslims: the standing of principal actors

The social role, faith and gender of the main actors in articles were examined, and the variables compared, in order to analyse the type of people associated with or allowed to speak for British Muslims. This kind of analysis is essential to an understanding of media roles in social representation and power relationships in society. Whilst a great quantity of data was generated from this analysis, two main findings emerged: that Muslims are denied legitimacy in the roles in which they are represented, and that women are marginalised as significant actors.

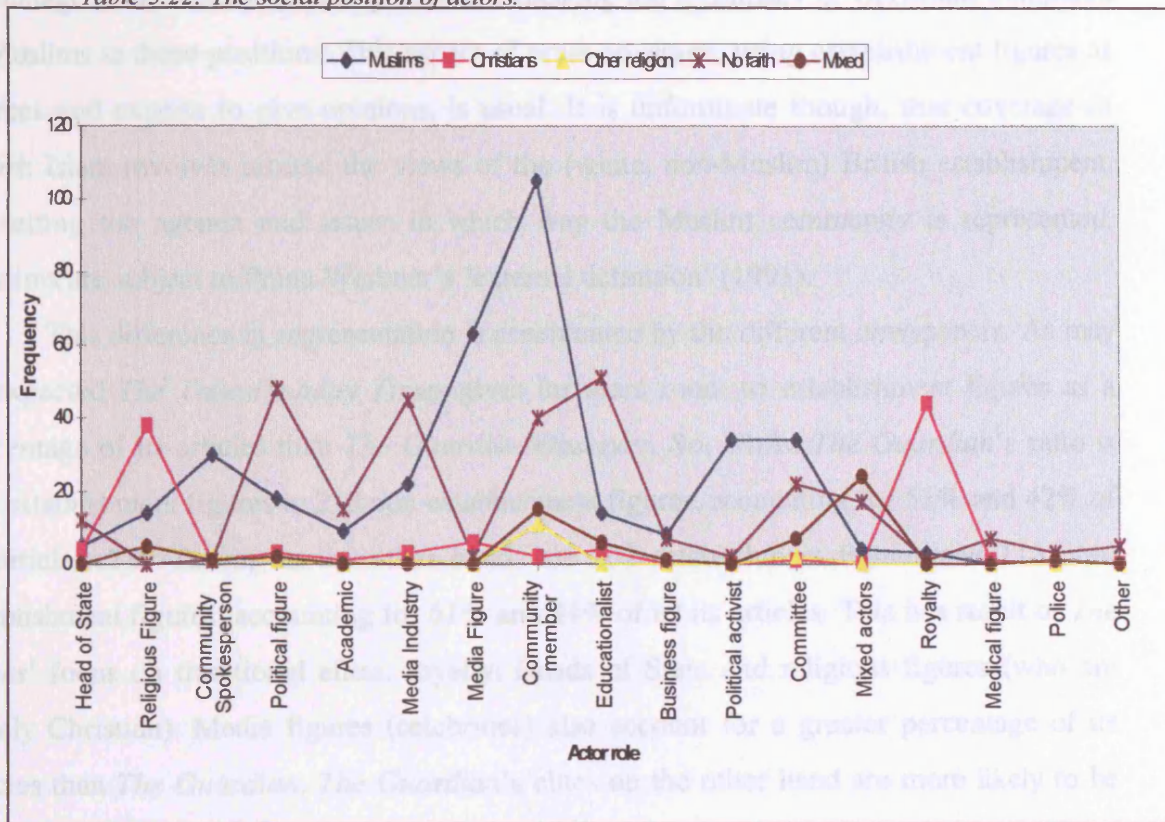
1. Muslims are denied legitimacy in social representation

Table 3.22 shows how Muslims and non-Muslims appear in particular social roles. It is evident that community members are most common in these articles (173 times) as are Muslims (364). It is also apparent, by the peaks and the troughs, that the different actors in terms of faith position are represented in very different roles. Additionally, people with no faith are highly likely to be represented whilst Christians appear mainly as royalty and religious figures and those from other faiths have a low occurrence overall.

To illustrate the patterns of representation in terms of power based roles, the social roles were merged into establishment and non-establishment positions to give an idea of the sort of Muslims that were given coverage in the press. The following have been included as establishment figures; Head of State, religious figures, political figures, academics, media workers, media figures, educationalists, royalty, medical figures and the police. This comes to a total of 402 articles, (48%). Members of the public include community spokespeople, community members, business figures (as these are usually small business Muslims not big

corporations), and political activists. This comes to 260, (31%). The conclusions, (Table 3.23) are interesting.

Table 3.22: The social position of actors.



	Establishment positions		Non-establishment positions	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Muslims	149	17.8	177	21
Christians	69	8.2	3	0.35
No faith given	184	22	50	6

Table 3.23: Social position of actor by religion.

It is clear that Muslims are far more likely to be represented in positions of little authority than people whose faith is not identified.²³ This can be explained partly by the secular nature of institutions in Britain but also means it is more likely that the secular perspective will prevail on important issues. Typically, actors whose faith is not clear are educationalists, politicians, academics, media workers, police and medics. It is perhaps significant that this illustrates the tendency not to label 'white' people by religion. Those Christians specified are easily identifiable (religious figures, royalty), otherwise, it is not seen as appropriate to do so. It is, however, appropriate to label minority groups as the

²³ Actors from other religions occupy similar non-establishment roles as community members, spokespeople.

majority of articles relating to them deal with minority issues. However, despite this, the percentage of Christians in establishment positions is higher comparatively than their percentage in non-establishment positions indicating the legitimacy of Christians compared to Muslims in these positions. This aspect of press coverage, using establishment figures as sources and experts to give opinions, is usual. It is unfortunate though, that coverage of British Islam revolves around the views of the (white, non-Muslim) British establishment. By setting the agenda and issues in which way the Muslim community is represented, Muslims are subject to Pnina Werbner's 'external definition' (1991).

This difference in representation is accentuated by the different newspapers. As may be expected *The Times/Sunday Times* gives far more room to establishment figures as a percentage of its articles than *The Guardian/Observer*. So, whilst *The Guardian's* ratio is 256 establishment figures to 213 non-establishment figures, accounting for 51% and 42% of its articles. *The Times*, on the other hand, has 202 establishment figures and 113 non-establishment figures, accounting for 61% and 34% of all its articles. This is a result of *The Times'* focus on traditional elites: royalty, Heads of State and religious figures (who are mainly Christian). Media figures (celebrities) also account for a greater percentage of its articles than *The Guardian*. *The Guardian's* elites on the other hand are more likely to be educationalists and media workers in addition to the greater access assigned to ordinary voices.

This is further reinforced by the appearance of actors in terms of their faith position in papers. As we have previously seen, Muslims and secular voices are most frequently represented (Table 3.24). Christians are more likely to be represented in *The Times/ST* (68) compared to *The Guardian's* (41). *The Guardian* carries more of all the other faith categories. This represents the authority *The Times* gives to more traditional voices whilst *The Guardian* has a more secular outlook.

Table 3.24: Frequency of actors occurring: faith position.

	<i>The Times/ST</i>	<i>The Guardian/Observer</i>	Total No.	Total %
Muslim	144	220	364	43.5
Christian	68	41	109	13
Other religion	7	15	22	2.6
No faith	100	180	280	33.5
Mixed	14	48	62	7.4

To provide some context to the type of story these actors appear in, an analysis of topics and actor frequencies was made. This resulted in fairly logical data (see Table 2.1, Chp. 2, p. 49). For example, educationalists in educational articles, media workers with the topic of media. However, there are some categories worth exploring. Obviously, community members are quite widely spread amongst topics. Also, most actors feature in articles expressing their concerns on education at some point. Sixty-five per cent of articles on criminal activity, however, had a community member as their main actor. Given the status of community members as mainly Muslim, this is particularly worrying. Forty-five per cent of articles on relationships are about media figures, i.e. celebrities, confirming news values of elitism, 35% of these articles involve community members. Predictably, Islamic fundamentalism is frequently associated with groups (33%) and political activists (26%). When a Head of State appears, it is mainly in association with fundamentalism and immigration, reinforcing the global context of this subject. These findings are further confirmed by an analysis of the faith of the main actor with topics. Muslims will obviously appear across a wide variety of subjects given their higher occurrence overall. The following results are interesting: 78% of articles on relationships are about Muslims. They appear either as elites or in relation to a topical issue such as conversion. Seventy-seven per cent of actors involved in criminal activity are confirmed as Muslims. Slightly lower are Muslims involved in fundamentalism, 63%. Muslims also have a significant presence in politics (54%), I have already highlighted its association with deviancy, followed by actors where no faith is given, 35%.

Perhaps more disturbing is the amount of Muslims appearing in articles on education, only 17%. This is compared to 59% where no faith is given and accounts for the amount of secular educationalists speaking on this topic (faith is unlikely to be specified unless it is a religious school). Media also fits this explanation: 46% having no faith.

Christians, apart from articles on Prince Charles, are the main actors when Islam is compared to Christianity, 61% of these articles. They contribute less to debates about education than Muslims, in 12.5% of articles. Otherwise, they too are dispersed.

Where the articles have mixed faiths represented equally within them, they are most likely to be about; education, relations with other religions, belief and ethnic minorities. Where the article is most likely to have a main actor who is a member of another religion, the article is most likely to be about relations to other religions, belief, **criminal activity**,

and health. These associations fit neatly with theories regarding religious and ethnic minority coverage.

The few stereotypical roles allocated here to Muslims: community members, media figures, political activists, business figures, community spokespeople and Committees (which are associated with the more controversial subjects) illustrate, not only the limited framework applied to British Muslims, but the lack of authoritative and 'normal' roles in which they are represented in the press. Even religious figures discussing Islam are more likely to be Christian! This framework is consistent, following a similar pattern yearly, increasing with the amount of coverage and closely linked to topics occurring (events in each year). Typical news values are applied to British Islam. Community members are more newsworthy if they are seen to be causing trouble but the elite approach is prevalent too. The frequency of politicians occurring as a main actor (the second highest frequency, 72 times) is also indicative of this.

2. Women are marginalised as significant actors

It is not unusual to find that women are marginalised voices in the news media since more authority is given to male expertise. However the marginalisation of women's voices (both Muslim and non-Muslim women) in the coverage of British Islam is of some significance. This is measured firstly in terms of straightforward frequency (Table 3.25) and then by the social position and the type of topics associated with women and Islam.

Table 3.25: Gender of principal actor

	Frequency	%
Male	492	58.8
Female	119	14.2
Unclear	153	18.3
Equal status	73	8.7

When combining the gender of actor with their standing, in all categories, men far outnumber the women (Table 3.26). In terms of actor appearing, the highest frequency is that of a male community member, occurring 81 times in 16.5 % of stories where the actor is male and 46.8 % of stories involving community members. However, a female is also most likely to appear as a community member than elsewhere. Female community members occur 54 times, this accounts for only 31.2 % of articles on community members but 45.4 % of articles where there is a female actor. The percentage is higher for women out of all

articles where the principal actor is female because male actors are spread amongst more categories.²⁴

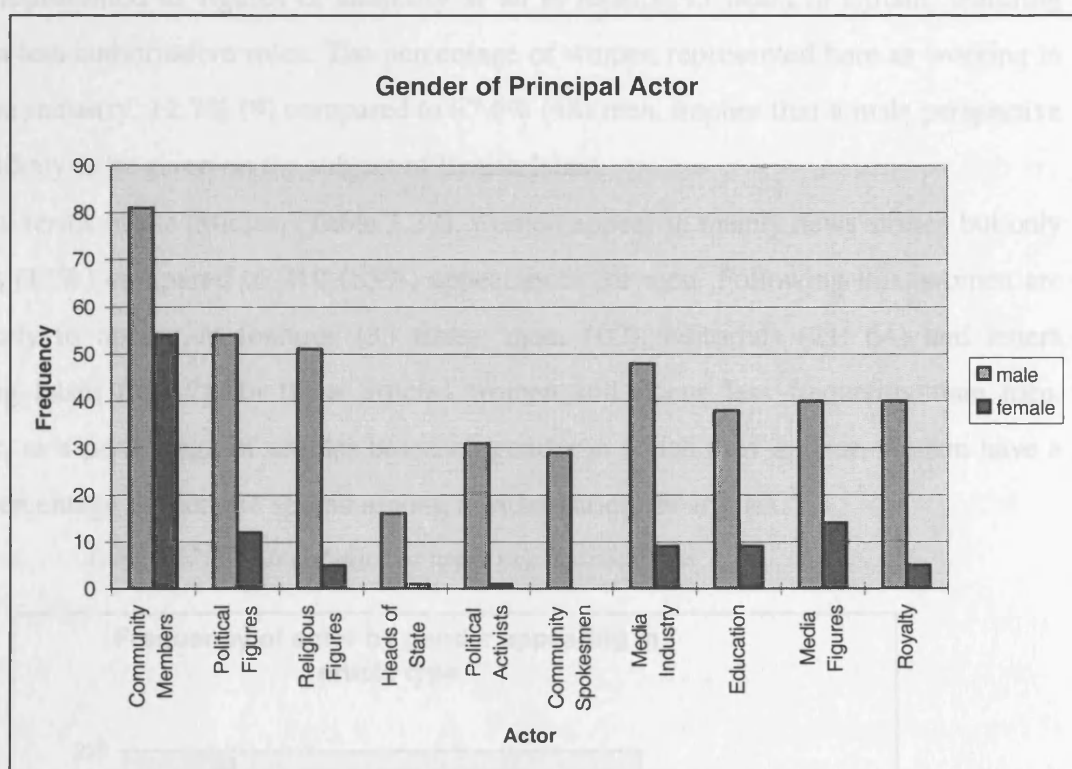


Table 3.26: Social position by gender.

Table 3.26 shows that men also occur more frequently in positions of authority, accounting for over 80% of these actors compared to less than 20% of women. One might expect there to be a higher percentage of women educationalists, reflecting the make-up of the profession, but men are still given more opportunity to represent a field where they are outnumbered by women, because they hold higher positions within it.

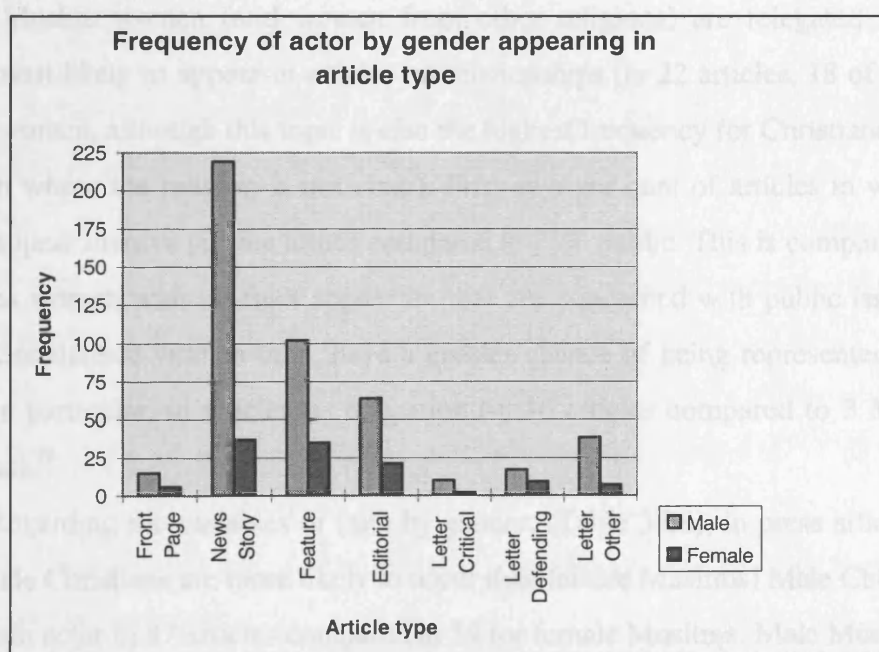
Women occur most frequently as community members as previously noted. The categories they are most likely to appear in after this are as media figures and political figures (albeit less than fifteen times). This is in all probability due to the female Education Secretary at the time, Gillian Shephard. Women occur infrequently in all other categories of actor and in every category less than men. Women do not appear at all as community spokespeople, business figures or the police.

²⁴ Not all categories are shown on the Table. Others included; Academics, Business figures, Committees, Reports with mixed actors, Police Officers, Sports people. There are less women in all these categories.

This indicates the authority of men as commentators in the press particularly in this area but is also a reflection of the amount of women in these positions in society. Women are not represented as figures of authority at all in relation to Islam in Britain, featuring mainly in less authoritative roles. The percentage of women represented here as working in the media industry, 12.7% (9) compared to 67.6% (48) men, implies that a male perspective is more likely to be given on the subject of British Islam.

In terms of the articles, (Table 3.27), women appear in mainly news stories but only 37 times (11%) compared to 219 (65%) appearances for men. Following this, women are most likely to appear in features (35 times, men: 102), editorials (21: 64) and letters defending Islam (9: 17). In these articles women still occur less frequently than men, however, as a percentage of articles based on gender in which they appear, women have a higher percentage as men are spread among a wider variety of articles.²⁵

Table 3.27: Gender of actor as appearing in article type.



These findings are indicative of the lower status of women in newspapers in relation to the subject of British Islam. They are considered to have less authority to comment and to be of less interest to the audience or of less importance so are less likely to be written about. This is especially apparent in that many articles are more likely to be about

²⁵ Again, only the most significant categories are shown in the Table. Other article types include sports news, news in brief and other types. Women occur in just 2 of these articles although numbers are also low for men.

individuals or groups where their gender is unclear than about women. This could be related to the lower public visibility of women in Islam and the difficulty for journalists in getting information. It is also partly related to the type of topics considered newsworthy in association with Islam.

In terms of the topics where women have a higher chance of being the main actor, these are, with the highest frequency first: personal relationships, education, criminal activity, conversion, gender issues and politics.²⁶ Of some concern is that, other than the subjects often associated with women, criminal activity features frequently, giving an indication of news values and ethnic groups. Women appear very rarely in articles on Islamic fundamentalism, business, freedom of speech, and the media.²⁷ Even in some of the neutral subjects such as health and belief, as well as the traditional male domains, women occur less frequently. These topics are indicative of Muslim women being regarded as victims of male aggression, at the mercy of, rather than being deviant themselves.

Muslim women (and women from other religions) are relegated to the private sphere, most likely to appear in articles on relationships (in 22 articles, 18 of which involve Muslim women, although this topic is also the highest frequency for Christians, compared to 3 women where the religion is not clear). Fifty-two per cent of articles in which religious women appear involve private issues compared to 23% public. This is compared to the 75% of articles women with no faith appear in, that are concerned with public issues and 15%, private. Secularised women then, have a greater chance of being represented in the public sphere, in particular, in articles on education (in 16 articles compared to 3 Muslims and 2 Christians).²⁸

Regarding the variables of faith by gender, (Table 3.28), in press articles on British Islam, male Christians are more likely to occur than female Muslims! Male Christians appear as the main actor in 87 articles compared to 59 for female Muslims. Male Muslims appear in 231 articles. If a female does appear, she is more likely to be a Muslim (49% of females) although 34% of females have no faith attributed to them. Thirteen per cent of women are

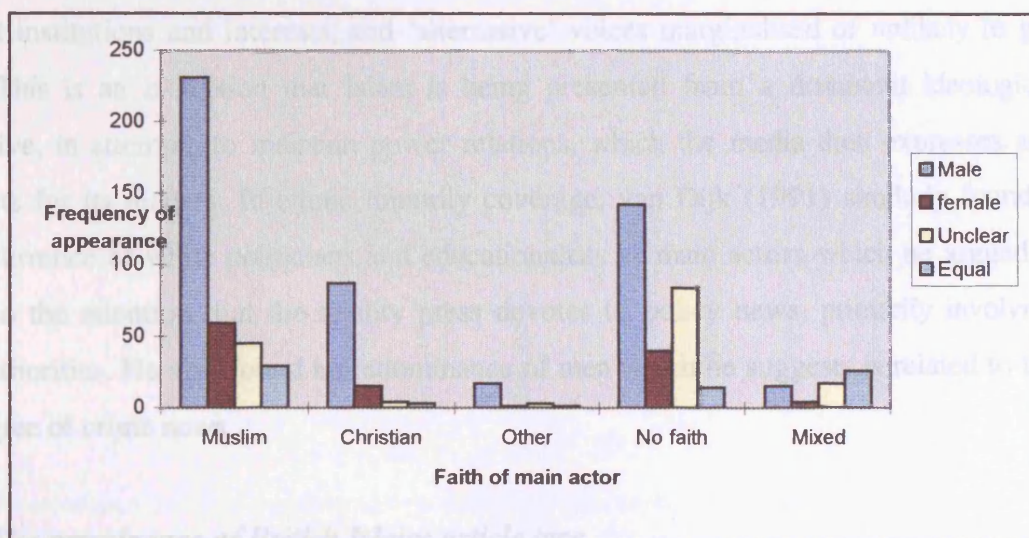
²⁶ These are the articles that women appear in most frequently but not necessarily more often than men. However, women do occur more frequently than men in articles on conversion, gender issues and relationships.

²⁷ i.e. once or twice.

²⁸ This could reflect the low participation of Muslim women in employment due to socio-cultural reasons (Anwar, 1993).

identified as Christians whilst the remaining 4% are from other faiths. Similarly, actors from other religions (ethnic) are more likely to be men.

Table 3.28: Faith and gender of main actors.



What is clear from these results is that in the coverage of British Muslims, women are marginalised to the traditional, private sphere in terms of roles and topics associated with the female gender. Few articles occur where men and women appear equally, those that do tend to be about relationships or education. The few articles where gender is not specified are general topics regarding education, fundamentalism, belief, racism, minorities etc. There is a slight difference between the papers. Although all categories of gender do appear more frequently in *The Guardian*, as a percentage of all its articles, more men feature in *The Times* (62% compared to *The Guardian*'s 57%). However, they both include a similar number of females, with *The Guardian* containing more articles where the sexes have an equal status.

What needs to be questioned is whether this is a reflection of Muslim values and its power hierarchy, the way the press represents Islam or a reflection of Western values in journalism? Or a mixture of all three? This is a question for consideration but not one that can be answered here. The aim here is to simply say how Islam in Britain is represented and women are by far less visible than men except in relation to a few specific subjects.

The lack of diversity, normal and legitimate roles in which Muslims occupy, within the narrow framework, contributes to accusations of non-assimilation aimed at Muslims

(when in actuality constitutes an example of exclusion). Islam will only be represented when it fits in with these narrow definitions. The definitions of Muslim affairs in news are dominated by non-Muslim groups and institutions. This is consistent with previous research on the main actors in news content which show important issues defined for the public by powerful institutions and interests, and 'alternative' voices marginalised or unlikely to get access. This is an indication that Islam is being presented from a dominant ideological perspective, in attempts to maintain power relations, which the media then expresses and constructs for its readers. In ethnic minority coverage, van Dijk (1991) similarly found a high occurrence of white politicians and educationalists as main actors which he argued is related to the attention that the quality press devotes to policy news, primarily involving white authorities. He also found a predominance of men which he suggests is related to the high degree of crime news.

The prominence of British Islam: article type

Table 3.29 shows that news coverage of British Islam reflects the quantity of coverage overall, given the amount of space allocated to different article types within a paper. Thus, news stories occur most frequently (338, 40% of coverage), followed by features (211, 25%), then editorials (118, 14%). It is logical that few should appear as news in brief, in which foreign coverage dominates. Letters tend to be of a general nature, offering facts and information about Islam (55, 6%). However, letters are often used by papers as a balance to coverage, therefore, there are more defensive letters than critical, (35 to 16) (they also act as a substitute for analysis). There are just 24 front page news stories, accounting for just 2% of front pages available in the three years (inevitably, there is often more than one story on the front page).

However, the amount of front page articles doubled in the three year period from 5 in 1994 to 10 in 1996. There was also an increase in news stories, editorials and letters critical of Islam, an indication of its growing salience, which reflects the growth of coverage on British Islam overall. None of the article types saw huge decreases, the largest being of features, a drop of 7%.

Table 3.29: Type of article stories on British Islam appear as.

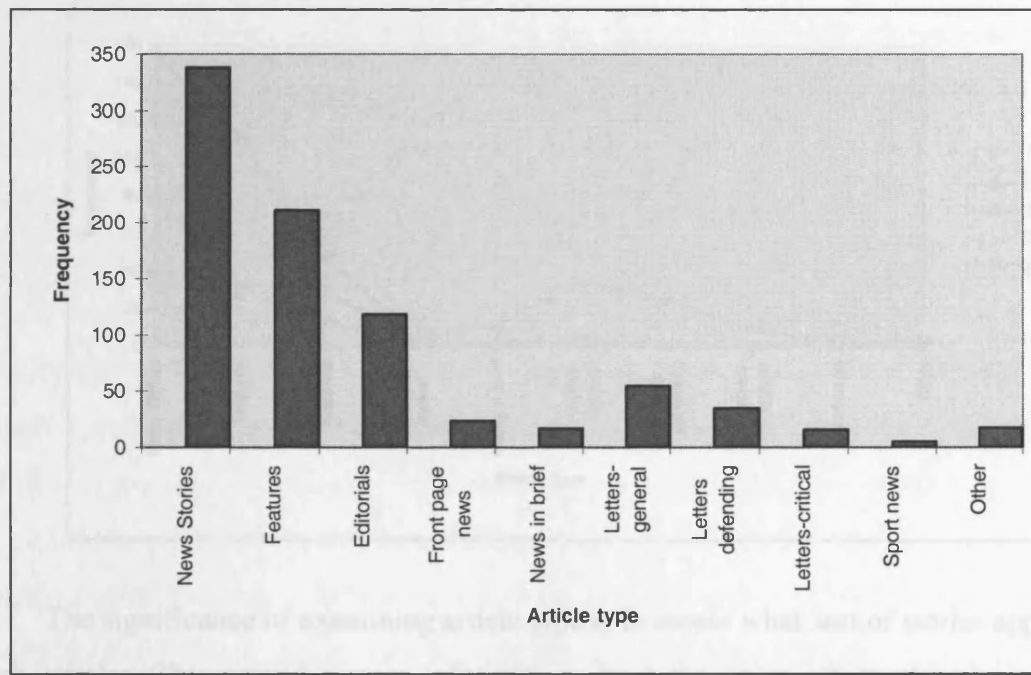
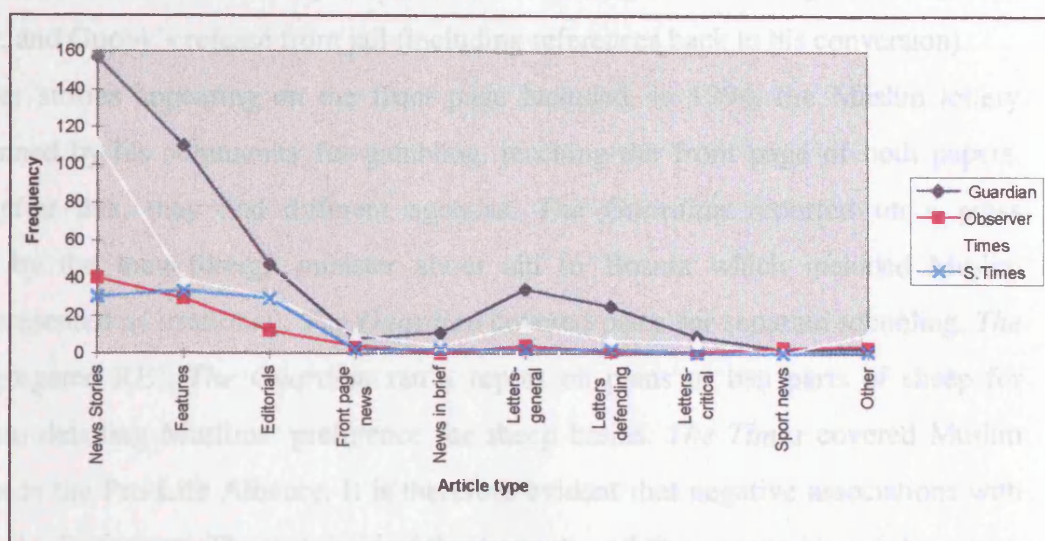


Table 3.30 shows the difference in coverage by papers. As might be expected, *The Guardian* has the highest frequencies of most articles given its higher coverage overall. However, *The Times* has a slightly higher quantity of front page news stories. This is due to its coverage of Prince Charles and is a reflection of news values in general, elite persons featuring in front page news stories. Although these articles are more likely to appear in *The Guardian*, the following account for a greater percentage of *The Times*' articles: news stories (48% compared to 39% of articles in *The Guardian*, and editorials (13% compared to *The Guardian*'s 12%). This is further evidence of the more restricted framework applied to Islam in *The Times*. However, a high percentage of *The Times*' features appear in *The Sunday Times* (46%) (more so than *The Observer* which carries only 21% of features in both *The Guardian* and *The Observer*). *The Sunday Times* also carries a greater quantity of editorials than *The Observer*. The evidence here shows that *The Times* is more likely to opine on events relating to British Islam than *The Guardian*. It may also be of note that the gap between articles defending Islam and those which criticise Islam is wider in *The Guardian* than *The Times*. This again is indicative of how *The Guardian* is open to a wider variety of perspectives.

Table 3.30: Article type as appearing in newspaper.



The significance of examining article type is to assess what sort of stories appear in which articles. This provides more information about the news values placed on issues relating to Islam as the location in the paper is an indication of importance assigned to the topic. As we may expect, front page news stories often focus on elite people. Thirty-seven per cent of these articles focused on either Prince Charles (mainly in *The Times*, for example, David Dimbleby's television interview with Prince Charles appeared on the front page); the relationships of elite people (Jemima and Imran Khan), which both papers covered along with her conversion and the wedding; or the conversion of Darius Guppy (jailed for the Lloyds insurance fraud). This is confirmed by reference to actor frequencies. Media figures account for 25% of front page news stories and royalty for 17%. In addition, political figures account for 17% as well as one article on a Head of State. However, relationships also hit the front page when some negative aspect can be applied. In 1996, both papers covered the anticipated return of 'child bride' Sarah Cook to England. Community members are more likely to appear in controversial topics such as fundamentalism and criminal activity, accounting for 17% of front page articles. *The Times'* front page news articles relating to fundamentalism included Government plans to deal with terrorists taking refuge in London following Iranian bomb raids on Israeli targets and plans for an Islamic rally by the extremist group al-Muhajiroun. For crime, it covered the Bradford riots and a murder inquiry in London involving Muslim perpetrators and victims. *The Guardian* did not cover any of these. It did report on the extremist group, Hamas' use

of London as a base for terrorism, political fraud in Birmingham involving Muslim groups and Labour, and Guppy's release from jail (including references back to his conversion).

Other stories appearing on the front page included, in 1994, the Muslim lottery winner shunned by his community for gambling, reaching the front page of both papers. However, after this, they had different agendas. *The Guardian* reported on a press conference by the then foreign minister about aid to Bosnia which included Muslim reactions (presented as irrational). *The Guardian* covered plans for separate schooling, *The Times*, 'segregated RE'. *The Guardian* ran a report on plans to ban parts of sheep for consumption, detailing Muslims' preference for sheep brains. *The Times* covered Muslim involvement in the Pro-Life Alliance. It is therefore evident that negative associations with Islam reach the front page. The threshold of these events and the news values of the papers contribute to their location. *The Times'* focus on Prince Charles and its law and order framework is clear. Both papers are equally interested in education. *The Guardian* is concerned with effective politics but Muslims are shown in an equally negative light. Both papers undermine and deride Muslims by focusing on abnormal pursuits, ridiculing tensions between practice and belief (lottery winner), fear the Muslim terrorist threat, attend to and detail unusual practices (food, underage marriage, Rally for Revival) and treat their activities with scepticism and ridicule (Rally, conversion). What is more, they forefront these aspects of Muslim life.

With other articles, as might be expected, the highest combinations (of topics and article type) appear most frequently together, the topics with the highest frequencies occur in articles of greater quantity, e.g. news stories about education. Evidently, hard topics are more likely to be news stories; crime, fundamentalism, politics. Seventy-four per cent of articles on crime occur as news stories and 77% of stories on protests.

Although these topics with the highest frequencies also occur in the same way as features, topics that are more likely to occur as features than news are media, belief, conversion, and gender, topics that may normally be associated with features. The positioning of events reflect general news practises then, the difference between 'soft' and 'hard' storylines and 'frequency' of occurrence (i.e. when the event occurred).

Comment on Islam has a slightly different emphasis. Although education is most likely to be editorialised, 'harder' coverage on the whole, is ignored. Opinion is more likely to be formed on people and their activities: relationships, Prince Charles or on issues of

significance to the papers themselves, the media. Articles about cultural differences, problems with adapting to the 'British' culture and crises of faith are more likely to raise judgements. When events occur in relation to British Islam, it is these sort of events that provoke the expression of particular viewpoints. Of note is that there is little comment on Islamic fundamentalism (only 3 articles). Are these articles so explicit that journalists feel there is little need to comment?

Perhaps some attention should be paid here to letters. Letters are normally written in response to an article which has been published previously in the paper. Letters critical of Islam are most likely to be in relation to Prince Charles and his attitudes towards it (25%). People are also critical of the way women are treated in Islam (12%), compare Islam negatively to Christianity (12%), and the Muslim Parliament (12%), in particular critical of the pronouncements of its leader, Kalim Siddiqui. Other issues that occur in this form include censorship, relations to other religions, relationships (unequal relations in) and accuse Muslims of discrimination. Most of these letters then are critical by focusing on the inherent difference of Muslims, differences which are negatively evaluated (62.5%). All these issues appear in both papers but to a greater extent in *The Guardian* (except articles on Prince Charles).

Letters defending Islam have a different focus. They are most likely to be about Islamophobia, stressing the need for religious discrimination legislation (20%) (*The Guardian* only). Letters defending Islam tend to be corrective, offering information about it, including Islam's position on women, human rights, intolerance, the homogenisation of Muslims, approaches to the Satanic Verses (11%), focusing on the discrimination of others (11%) and offering reasons why Muslims are demanding certain educational policies (for example; the success of Muslim schools) (11%). There are letters that redress messages on fundamentalism, censorship, and compare Islam's positive aspects to negative aspects of Christianity. Here, the focus is much more on the discrimination towards Muslims (37%) whilst also contesting accusations of separatism (23%) and difference (23%), disputing the cultural threat. Again, much more of these appear in *The Guardian*. Their presence shows a willingness to present an alternative perspective but raises questions about the articles that prompted them. It is also questionable about the balancing impact of letters given the overall effect of negative coverage.

Letters which do not express a like or dislike for Islam tend to offer facts and information or are critical of policies, Christianity or some other aspect of articles without professing attitudes to Islam. These are most likely to be about education (22%) (projects being taught in schools such as learning about the Holocaust, pro Religious Education, not instruction of any kind), the media (13%) (criticisms and praise of religious broadcasting, criticising the use of imagery in various media which is offensive to Muslims), facts about Islam (7%) and Prince Charles (7%). Letters of this kind appear in relation to a wide number of topics, 16 others. To give an idea of the flavour of some of these, appearing are; letters offering Islam's doctrine on divine judgement, correcting the paper's translation of the Koran, corrections on the meaning of semitism, criticism of the paper's interpretations of Christianity suggesting other religions would not be treated as such, inter-faith co-operation and tolerance. Some of these letters are from Muslims not defending their own faith but criticising aspects of the British system, people (politicians) and laws.

Topics which are obviously areas of debate which appear in all types of letters are the media, freedom of speech/ censorship, gender issues, discrimination and comparing Islam to Christianity. This reflects the tendencies of papers, when dealing with a controversial issue, to print letters with opposing viewpoints.

The types of actors appearing in different article types reinforces the categorisations of news content above. All actors are more likely to appear in news stories except media workers who appear mainly in features. Other actors who are highly likely to appear in features include; community members, educationalists, committees and media figures. This reflects the softer news content of features. Academics appear more prominently in letters but only those that are general or defensive. This reflects the tendency of newspapers to feature letters written by academics, giving them greater authority. These mainly appear in *The Guardian*, 80% (perhaps indicative of the liberal, leftist outlook of many academics). Community members also defend or write in general about Islam, as well as community spokespeople, Committees, religious, political figures and educationalists. Critical letters are more likely to be written by the general public (non-Muslim). There are occasional criticisms from politicians, religious figures, community spokespeople and educationalists. Media workers feature most strongly in editorials, reflecting their authorship about a range of issues. This is followed by media figures, royalty, educationalists and community members (fitting logically with the topic areas editorialised). There is also some comment

on political and religious figures. As might be expected, more non-Muslims write letters critical of Islam whilst more Muslims defend it. Letters of a general nature are also more likely to be written by non-Muslims.

The geography of British Islam

Regions significant in the reporting on British Muslims reflect both localities where newsworthy events take place and newsgathering processes. London, then, occurs most frequently, 246 articles, 29%, followed by big cities which have a significant Muslim presence such as Birmingham; 46, (5.5%) and Bradford; 37, (4.4%). Birmingham's schools were a particular focus for educational debate in this period of time and in Bradford, the unrest in 1995. To some extent this reflects the distribution of Muslims throughout the UK. Anwar (1993) estimated that 60% of Muslims live in London and the South East (mainly Outer London), closely followed by the West Midlands and West Yorkshire. However, it is not merely a straightforward reflection of the ethnic mix of the country, he also found South Lancashire to be highly populated, marginalised in press coverage. Other cities which have large communities living within them also slip through the news net (Tuchman, 1978). Bolton, Bristol, Coventry, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield all have substantial ethnic minority communities, yet none of these cities have even 10 stories about their Muslim communities featured (and some none at all). This is an indication of how certain geographical 'spaces' become associated with particular groups. It also illustrates the tendencies of journalists to revisit known sources and familiar faces for information.

There are a substantial quantity of articles where the locations are mixed (113, 13.5%), but more of which are not spatially located, 132, (16%). Significantly, the home country of British Muslims is the setting for 66 articles, 8%. This increased by 12% over the three year period. Many of the 'mixed' locations reflect a link between home and abroad. It again reflects the 'foreignness' of Muslims, whose loyalty is located elsewhere. The ties between countries are seen to be threatening as part of Islam's global nature (which allows it to be homogenised).

Other sources show a wide variety of Muslim activity taking place throughout the country (see BMMS²⁹ which reports monthly on activities covered in both the national and

²⁹ *British Muslims Monthly Survey*, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham.

local press). Yet this diversity is not represented in the national press. In order for the effort to be made for a journalist to report on an unusual location, highly newsworthy events must be taking place. The appearance of the South East (outside London) reflects articles on Sarah Cook whose home county is Essex (47, 6%). Scotland is the location for 24 articles, 3%, due to the Govan by-election and Muslims efforts to elect their candidate. Oxford is the setting for 15 articles. This is in relation to the University and plans for a new centre for Islamic studies, an event which raised debates as to whether it was a legitimate project in the eyes of Oxford's residents (in addition to debates regarding appropriate funders).

To give further insight into the framing of topics, their typical localities have been analysed. Only those topics with a significant presence in a location are reported here:

Activities reported in London

Fundamentalism (66 articles, 69% of articles on Islamic fundamentalism take place in London)

Crime (37, 40% of articles on crime)

Immigration (34, 81%)

Education (31, 21%)

Religious practices (27, 33%)

Media (19, 46%)

Racism (19, 30%)

Relationships (16, 18%)

Relations to Christianity/other religions (17/17, 22/37%)

Activities reported in Home Country

Relationships (32, 35.5% of articles on relationships)

Politics (18, 27%) Criminal activity (16, 17%)

Activities reported in Birmingham

Education (29, 19%)

Activities reported in Scotland

Politics (18, 27%)

Activities where no location is given

Religion (30, 46%) Education (29, 19%)

Media (21) Prince Charles (16, 37%)

Activities where the location is mixed

Education (16)

This framework demonstrates how issues relating to the capital are mainly concerned with law and order. It is also an illustration of the news net, located at important institutions: courts, police, governmental sources, and the media. Relationships reflects the

emphasis on elites, mainly living in London. Topics relating to the home country include relationships and focus on both non-Muslim relationships with 'foreigners' and Muslims' relationships with Muslims abroad. Political ties with foreign groups are also relevant.

The content of articles which are not situated tends to be general, for example, on educational policy. The implementation of these policies in different boroughs and reactions to them are reported in a variety of regions and compared in the media.

Regional specification adds to the narrow framework of reporting on Islam, especially in relation to particular topics. For example, the focus on Islamic fundamentalists (immigrants) living in London.

Due to the significance of Leicester to this study, it is of interest to report on coverage located there. Education has the highest appearance, (3 articles) accounting for 57% of articles set in Leicester and 2.5% of education articles. Health is also an issue (twice), media (once) and anti-racism (once). These topics reflect Leicester's image as a model city for harmonious race relations and therefore concentrates on service provision. The articles on education focus on the practice of separate teaching of Religious Education in schools and gender issues, the health articles on beliefs that may prevent Muslims receiving treatment (for example, becoming organ donors/having the rubella inoculation).³⁰

The main findings in this part of the research then are as follows:

- Coverage of British Islam is increasing. However, it only accounts for a small proportion of coverage on Islam, most of which is concerned with international events.
- British Islam consistently takes on a few limited forms in the press albeit having a wider diversity of representation than its global image due to political and social necessity. However, coverage of British Islam is strongly tied to countries and people abroad delineating networks and implicating British Muslims with events overseas, allowing them to be seen as part of a world wide phenomenon.
- This narrow framework of representation is further bound together by a restricted number of meanings. These reflect the anxieties of differing elite groups who represent Islam as a threat to majority British interests, both political, social, and cultural. The major topics associated with Islam fluctuate in their emphasis over the three year period due to events but remain the most dominant topics in each year. This consistency continues in 1997

³⁰ Elsewhere, health focuses on the more deviant practice of female circumcision.

and 1998. Actors within articles tend only to be identified as Muslims if the story explicitly expresses these themes associated specifically with Muslims.³¹ If not, the story will be represented within a racial paradigm.

- However, coverage is not homogenous and spaces for oppositional perspectives are present. These are mainly to be found in *The Guardian* which pays more attention to minority views. However, both papers have remarkably similar news values and categorisation in relation to British Islam.

- Partly, the current manifestation of British Islam in the press has been pushed onto the agenda by Muslim groups (reflecting the struggle for representation in public life). However, at the point of production, they lose control of the meaning which tends to be framed within a dominant ideological framework based on an agenda of maintaining and protecting sacred values and institutions, be it traditional, conservative (*The Times*) or liberal (*The Guardian*).

- Articles on British Islam fit within a framework of dominant news values: elitism, negativisation, threshold, consonance, personalisation, continuity and unambiguity (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). However, articles are more likely to appear if they match the news values attached to minorities in general, i.e. negativisation and problematisation. Representations of British Islam are composed of a mingling of perceptions and attitudes related to ethnic minorities in Britain with current and more established notions of Islam on a wider scale (Orientalism).

- British Islam is presented within an ethnocentric ideological (secular) framework. A non-Muslim official position is given legitimacy in defining British Islam to the public. Women's voices are further marginalised in this process.

Thus, Muslims are not seen as an integral part of British society. The absence of 'normal' stories they appear in, the lack of diversity of roles which result, due to the selection of stories seen as specifically dealing with 'Muslim affairs', results in a consistently narrow framework of representation. This has firmly established itself in the 1990s stemming from events in the late 1980s (The Rushdie and Honeyford Affairs) which defined 'what it means to be Muslim' and attempted to construct a closure around these definitions. This, combined with images of the global fanatic, xenophobic tendencies and anxieties

³¹ For example, the topic of conversion is almost exclusively covered in relation to Islam. Cultural differences are reified in terms of the problematisation of the Other and the meanings established are based on age-old practices of alienating the religion, preventing further conversions and the spread of Islam.

regarding minorities in general which are exacerbated by what is interpreted as Muslim separatism, as they attempt to preserve their culture and traditions, have resulted in the images of Islam made explicit here.

Issues of Interpretation

Newspaper variations

This news framework is an indication of widespread assumptions about what constitutes news in this area. Interest in Islam depends on whether events fit into this developing framework. As Islam becomes more controversial and demonised, *The Times*' coverage is increasing. *The Guardian* although, on the whole, having a similar news framework to *The Times*, has more spaces of oppositional coverage, framing issues in more sympathetic ways. This reflects both the ownership of the paper (non-profit-making, see Chp. 2) and the target audience; educated liberals. The selection of events often corresponds with how far they can be constructed to fit and reaffirm specific 'cultures of understanding' of distinct readerships (Lacey and Longman, 1997). Commercial imperatives both marginalizes the presence of diverse voices and reinforce mainstream values to reproduce the established system and order. However, the qualitative analysis will attempt to show how this hegemony is contested and media coverage cannot be assumed to be blanket like. The increasing presence of Muslims in the public sphere is an example of this but the framing of these articles shows how certain issues can be highlighted or squeezed out of public debate. The orientations of these two papers may be very different but in relation to British Islam, they are selecting the same topics for emphasis. In terms of creating public awareness about Islam, at this stage, the similarities in coverage appear to outweigh the differences.

News practices

Partly, these coherent patterns of coverage can be explained by news gathering practices, values, ideologies and routines. The finite resources available for news production, the space/time constraints, reliance on institutional, official sources account for the reproduction of particular stereotypes. These conventions result in concentration on specific events which constitute 'affairs', rather than deeper, longer term analyses of structural disadvantage (van Dijk, 1991). However, the selective emphasis, the consistency in maintaining a closed parochial image, keeping particular issues on the agenda and

avoiding others, requires effort, demonstrating an agenda that cannot be explained solely by lazy journalism. The quantity of coverage, the time period it runs for and the angles taken depends on all the issues presented here. Islam as an issue competes with other social problems for attention within the limited space of the news media (see Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988, for their ideas about limited space and competition). Islam is increasingly salient for the political and social reasons explored in Chapter One. In particular, the coverage analysed here, employs a defensive strategy; an agenda which marginalises a minority group in Britain, their culture and practices made incomprehensible in order to maintain and protect the values, institutions and laws of the majority groups, the dominant hegemony. Chapter One detailed arguments relating to the crisis of national identities which are further reinforcing this process. Islam has become an easy and acceptable target due to what are conceived as Muslims' refusals to be 'assimilated' around the world and their demands for legitimate rights, which have been interpreted as extremism and fanaticism.

Literature comparison: Islam

Islam does then, appear to have been divided in to the 'manageable facts' of Said's (1978) Orientalism, even within a British context. How far the discourse relating to Islam constrains this further or opens up spaces for positive representation is examined in the next chapter. However, it is possible to make some comparisons between the representations as identified by the literature and the findings here.

That Islam and Muslims have failed to catch up with the modern world, is illustrated by the coverage of cultural differences, expressed in the practices of Muslims within personal relationships, by the debate about freedom of speech, its irrationality, deviance and general beliefs. Cultural atrocities committed by Muslims in the UK are referred to in articles 62 times, (7.4%). Muslims are represented as having problems with adaptation, having a propensity to conflict and extremism, connoting primitivism. Their activities, based on primitive beliefs, can thus be used to define Muslims as irrational, marginalising their voices further. The depictions of violence which have prominence in the literature, however, are more muted on a local scale. Whilst coverage is characterised by an undercurrent, signifying the possibility of violence erupting, an omnipresent aggressor, cultural proximity and the need for integration excludes the possibility of these more extreme images. However, the apparent necessity to sustain a viable threat results in the selection of events where conflict can be employed. This association helps homogenise Muslims and keeps

them disparate so political policy and practices around the world can be justified. An example of this is in the depiction of the fanatical masses. Since The Rushdie Affair and, apart from The Bradford riots, there has been little coverage of this kind. The topic of unrest was present in 49 articles, (5.8%), a small amount considering that this is a dominant image of global Islam. The only other event that evoked ideas of 'the crowd' (Le Bon, 1960), was the al-Muhajiroun Rally for Revival at Wembley which was eventually cancelled.

Findings here appear to be congruent with the literature on British Islam and the position of British Muslims. Muslims in Britain are clearly not considered to be a security or physical threat. This threat comes from foreign influences, dissidents within. The major concern with British Muslims is in their separatism and ideologically. Whilst the data is consistent with the literature which depicts Islam as the alien culture, mass migration is less prevalent in these findings than concern with those already rooted in the UK. The polarisation of values is evident, a confrontational dichotomisation which demonstrates a desire to clearly differentiate between 'them' and 'us'. The constructed threat to established values, emphasising Western socio-cultural supremacy, works to protect and fix identities in times of uncertainty. Islam's supposed inferiority, extremity, primitivism, misogyny and threat then, are all images that have some strength in the local context. The difference is not only in emphasis but additional concerns particular to individual nations and groups within. Given Britain's close political relationship with America, it is evident that Britain's motivations and actions towards Muslims internationally will be similar, but its internal policies and relations with its minorities are also very different. The requirement for harmony within establishes a need to be able to get along with the neighbours, hence the dilution of the one dimensional image of the extremist terrorist. So, although Dahlgren and Chakrapani's (1982) three motifs cannot be applied on a national scale (to Britain), the themes of social disorder, flawed development and primitivism are applicable to British Muslims within. Explicated here are the additional themes employed in relation to the Islam confined within Britain's borders.

The homogeneity of Muslims is indicated by the narrow framework including; a lack of diversity in the roles of Muslims, their marginalisation, particularly of women, and the commonality with Muslims around the world (global force). However, there is also evidence here of some diversity particularly between papers. More attention needs to be paid to this in the qualitative analysis.

Coverage of ethnic minorities

Coverage of British Islam is similar to that of ethnic minorities in its negativisation, the problematisation of a multicultural society, the lack of diversity expressed through topics such as crime, immigration, unrest and conflict, signifying deviance. It is these concerns relating to the infiltration of British society combined with Oriental conceptions of Muslims which results in the composition of images found here. Events have to be synonymous with stereotypical ideas of Muslims and are then used to express more general attitudes to minority groups. The unacceptability of racism and global events have allowed discourse previously aimed at a variety of ethnic groups to shift to Muslims thus allowing the continuation of a long standing prejudices.

Although there are problems with comparing research findings due to the different ways of categorising and analysing data, in addition to the specific focus on the coverage of Muslims here, it does add perspective to the findings of this research project. The lack of ability to compare with previous findings on coverage of Islam means some analysis of general patterns will be made. There have already been some attempts to do this. van Dijk (1991) in his research on ethnic minority coverage across five British papers found a shift from 1985-89 to a 'new racism', based on cultural differences which increasingly focused on the behaviour of Muslims.³² My results verify the increasing interest in Muslims and cultural differences but cannot contextualise the findings to a wider analysis of coverage of minorities in general. Further research comparing the coverage of Muslims to other groups would reveal how far coverage has shifted in this direction. However, van Dijk's findings specifically relating to Muslims indicate that Muslims have been defined by these events (The Rushdie and Honeyford Affairs, 1989) and what they represent (a political, social and cultural threat) which has cultivated subsequent coverage (signifying what Muslims mean to us).

Coverage of Islam has a consistency with the findings of previous research in its association with crime and immigration and a similar absence of services of concern to minority groups: health and housing and every day coverage of social life (Smith, 1989). However, what has become apparent here is whilst topics of coverage can be similar, they are often framed in a different way. Crime is associated with corruption rather than riots and

³² van Dijk's research found that Muslims were almost exclusively associated with negative topics based on education (separate schooling), religion and protests during The Rushdie Affair.

mugging. The need to exclude has shifted to a need to integrate. What all the findings of these projects have in common is that coverage expresses similar concerns regarding the integration of minority groups and threats to majority interests but express these differently according to prevailing ideologies regarding different groups in different political epochs. van Dijk (1991: 117) argues that in the coverage of ethnic affairs, the press 'closely reproduces, confirms, and legitimates prevailing ideologies as well as the power relations based on them'. There is clearly evidence of this here yet oppositional spaces are also evident, the increase in coverage of racism and cultural/religious discrimination compared to previous research findings, for example.

1997 Analysis

These predominant topics and themes became more pronounced in 1997/98 providing a consonance with earlier events. In 1997, I completed an additional content analysis examining the topics of significance in this year. This aimed to provide the context for the discourse analysis and ascertain the consistency of the framework over a longer period of time. This year sees a convergence in the coverage of *The Times* and *The Guardian* and a correspondence in the appearance of dominant topics with previous years. However, Table 3.31 demonstrates the shift in the volume of coverage allocated to them, based on the 'significant' events of the year. In fact, the same five topics predominate although with different positions of dominance to the previous years. It is evident then, that the same sort of stories relating to British Islam are newsworthy but appear as 'new' events.

Politics is particularly significant due to the general election and selection of the first Muslim MP. His subsequent arrest for vote-rigging explains the number of articles on criminality. Coverage of relationships remains high due to the relationship of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed and their ensuing death and funerals. Additionally, speculation began to circulate on the breakdown of Imran Khan's marriage. Education remains to be of some concern due to the ongoing debates regarding the funding of Muslim schools, an issue which appears to be of greater salience to *The Times* than *The Guardian*. Fundamentalist activities continue to be a focus following the murder of several tourists at an ancient site in Luxor, Egypt, by the al-Gama'a al-Islamiya extremist group, resulting in discussions about the presence of Islamic militants in Britain. Royalty is also prevalent in this year but rather than based on the speeches of Prince Charles, is due to his visit to Bangladesh and the

Queen's visits to Pakistan and India. Norman Tebbit's remarks about multiculturalism at the Tory Party Conference caused a furore. The Rushdie debate continued as the fatwa was renewed and in relation to discussions on freedom of speech as a report on Islamophobia was launched to fight religious discrimination (interpreted as blasphemy). Conversions in this year included Chris Eubank and Prince Naseem's new wife. The articles on Christianity in *The Times* dealt mainly with the decline of Christianity in Britain compared to the rise of Islam but both papers took up the story of a Bishop reading the Koran for lent. A comparative framework thus ensues. Lastly, articles on discrimination are included (racism and Islamophobia) to illustrate the continuing limited attention given to these issues. Given that these topics, together, account for 88.8% of articles on British Islam in this year, the framework appears to be narrowing.

Table 3.31: Topics occurring in 1997

	<i>The Times</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		Total
Topic	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Politics	52	27.5	34	17	86
Criminality	27	14	40	20	67
Relationships	17	9	24	12	41
Education	20	10.5	11	5.5	31
Fundamentalism	9	5	13	6.5	22
Royalty	15	8	7	3.5	22
Censorship/ Rushdie	14	7.4	14	7	28
Multi- culturalism	6	3.1	12	6	18
Christianity	12	6	5	2.6	17
Conversion	10	5.2	2	1	12
Discrimination	4	2	5	2.6	9

The differing degrees of emphasis reinforce some of the variations in the news values of the papers. Tebbit's right wing views on multiculturalism were more controversial for *The Guardian*. *The Times* focuses on traditional stereotypes such as conversion and maintains its Royal and comparative slant. However, there are some shifts in emphasis, the diminished focus on politics and increased attention to criminality in *The Guardian* and vice-versa in *The Times*. It is the purpose of the qualitative analysis to explore the differences and similarities more fully. I decided that the five most recurring topics should be used for the qualitative analysis as it is probable that the main themes and perceptions of

Islam in its different forms will be expressed through these subjects. It is these that are likely to have some impact on public perceptions of Islam. Due to the concurrence of politics and criminal activity together, I decided that these should be merged and coverage of the Sarwar Affair analysed. More attention is given to these choices in the following chapter.

The Mail

For the qualitative analysis, I decided that two tabloid papers, both middle and lower market, should be included in order to examine the consistency in news values with the quality papers. On the basis of these results, inferences regarding a more restrictive and marginal framework of representation could be made, given the different criterion for newsworthiness whereby tabloids focus more on entertainment rather than politics and foreign affairs. Their scope, then, is often more limited, presenting a jingoistic picture of the foreigner. The initial quantitative analysis showed that the same topics and stories were newsworthy to *The Mail* but were marginalised further by a lack of depth and fleeting coverage. Much less space and attention then is allocated in the middle market tabloid press but the agenda appears to be the same.³³ Table 3.32 shows the breadth of coverage, which accounts for less than a quarter of coverage in each of this year's quality papers.³⁴ This is partly to do with the greater restrictions on space a tabloid has, but also the lack of interest in minority affairs which are conceived as having little to do with the lives and interests of the target readership. These topics account for over half *The Mail's* coverage, a similar amount to their given space in the broadsheets. Again, Royalty is of interest to this right-wing establishment paper. It is unlikely that multiculturalism would get much space excluding the coverage of Lord Tebbit. However, it is important to ask what this represents? It raises questions about the place of minorities in British society and thus fits into the meta-theme of integrative concerns. The way these articles are framed is obviously a focus for the qualitative analysis and the recurrence of the same topics makes a comparative analysis possible. What is absent from *The Mail* in this year is education. The lack of coverage reveals the reliance on official sources for this topic to be newsworthy.

³³ In terms of global Islam, *The Mail* covered Luxor and the fate of the Saudi nurses in detail. Other coverage included features on suicide bombers, idiosyncratic articles such as the production of 'appropriate' dolls in Iran and only transient attention to other global conflicts. This clearly establishes the paper as parochial, interested only in events affecting Britain. Other articles appear only to construct an image of fanaticism and difference.

³⁴ A total of 46 articles compared to *The Times's* 189 and *The Guardian's* 198.

Although of growing significance to the community in this year, due to their increasing negotiations with the Government on state funded Muslim schools, the lack of action or policy decisions made in this area means it was not taken up by the paper. It was, however, when the Government released their plans to fund two Muslims schools, early in 1998.

The Sun's coverage will be examined separately in the next Chapter due to its different emphasis on story selection. The aim will be to see whether these stories emphasise similar meta-themes to the other papers but express them according to the paper's style and audience.

Table 3.32: Topics covered in 1997 by The Mail.

Topic	Frequency	%
Politics	8	17.3
Prince Charles	5	11
Fundamentalism	5	11
Blasphemy	3	6.5
Multiculturalism	3	6.5
Christianity	3	6.5

Conclusion

I have shown, in this chapter, how Islam is understood across a limited number of topics and framed within a narrow definition of Islam, thus constituting a particular 'symbolic universe' (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982: 45). Coverage is linked to events in addition to the framework but the consistency of coverage over the three year period suggests that a consensus of news values has been established and events will be selected if they are in accordance with this. When looking at an overall view of the data it is possible to identify how these topics are interlinked and framed so certain themes emerge. The data resulting from particular categories of analysis appears to reinforce the data in others, providing both evidence of its reliability and the consistency of the framework. However, whilst there is a high degree of homogeneity in the themes associated with Islam present in the mainstream press, total homogeneity should not be assumed. These themes will be represented and delivered in a variety of ways depending on the news values, style and target audience of differing newspapers. In addition to this, both slippages and contradictions in content occur both between papers and within articles.

Whilst focusing on these topics, the aim has been to establish, as with Hartmann et al (1974: 117), the sort of 'material made available to the public as a whole'. They argued

that newspapers, being widely read, have some influence on topics of public discussion which become 'part of the shared perspectives that people use to make sense of their world'. On this basis, it is the overall picture that matters. Newspapers, through the selection and inclusion of topics, frame social reality, constructing social meaning for their readers, and promote particular 'ways of seeing' Islam in Britain. They provide a description of the world produced within a specific interpretative framework, located within a limiting social, historical context. This framework should not be taken to be deliberate distortion but generated from complex processes in news production and rooted in cultural assumptions.

Some of the conclusions made here are provisional. The purpose of the qualitative analysis is to explore them further, to examine whether nuances in the discourses are subsumed by the framework shown here, to examine the subtle differences in representation by different papers and to establish how far patterns of representation of Islam can be collapsed into these few meanings.

Chapter 4:

British Islam: A Discursive Construction.

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the dominant social meanings of British Islam to be found in sections of the British press at a particular historical moment. A methodological approach based on discourse analysis congruent with Fowler's (1991) notion of discourse was employed, also drawing on insights from a range of work in linguistics and visual analysis, which maintains that aspects of linguistic features, both syntactic and semantic, contain ideological significance (Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Hartley, 1982; van Dijk, 1988, 1991). Through an examination of the deployment of lexical choices, sentence structures, structural transformations and photographic imagery in texts, this study will make explicit the implicit assumptions contained within them which constitute cultural indicators of the current political epoch (in the UK). Underpinning this study is the theoretical conception that all texts are discursively constructed, reproducing available discourses in society. Meaning is never fixed as it shifts at different moments in the communication process. However, discourse analysis aims to show how practices of representation attempt to secure meaning, privileging certain constructions over others.

Whilst the quantitative analysis provides the wider context within which these findings can be placed, the qualitative study provides additional in-depth analysis of the politics of the representation of British Islam. The extent of coherence between papers is examined along with the subtle differences, the contending discourses which represent a struggle for symbolic and actual power. Contextual knowledge is vital in understanding the interests underlying the ideologies which are to be found in competing formulations of an event.

Inevitably, the complexity of media discourse and the sheer number of articles retrieved for this analysis has required massive data reduction and simplification through the presentation of the results. By concentrating on the important findings then, the methods of analysis cannot always be fully explicated. However, some linguistic procedures will be drawn on to demonstrate the extraction of meaning.

The five most significant events about British Islam in 1997 were selected for examination, informed by the quantitative analysis' topics of prominence (shown in Table

4.1. Categories 1 and 3 were merged to give the five). The correspondence in coverage in 1997, to the previous years, allowed significant stories to be found on these topics.

Table 4.1: Dominant topics (with subtopics) ascertained from the 1994-6 quantitative analysis.

Education and Religion
Rushdie and Freedom of Speech
Education and Segregation
Islamic fundamentalism and Immigration
Relationships and criminal activity
Politics and Criminal activity

In this chapter, after the initial contextual quantitative information, each topic is presented separately and the discourses emerging from them examined, rather than dealing with the significant discourses and providing examples from each topic. Each section is structured differently according to the outcomes, for example, papers are treated separately if there is much diversity in their discourse. In presenting the data, I decided to take a holistic approach partly because the complex overlapping threads of discourse would make the task of separating them almost impossible but also because I believe that the texts should be examined in the context of similar texts, that the accumulation of meaning is important. The inter-textuality of meaning across topics and papers is examined as a result of this, providing us with a full ‘representational paradigm’ of British Islam (Hamilton, 1997).

Quantitative Findings

A total of 128 articles from 1997 were analysed plus 31 extra articles from 1996 making 159 in total.¹ Table 4.2 shows the amount of coverage for each story, Table 4.3 coverage in each paper. The attention given to these issues is consistent with previous years.² It provides further evidence of the closing gap between coverage in *The Guardian*

¹ These extra articles fall under coverage of education. When I began the analysis, half way through the year (1997), there appeared to be little substantial coverage in this area. I therefore felt it would be beneficial to examine articles from 1996, apparent in the quantitative analysis, to establish the discourses relating to Muslims and education. Following this, more articles on education began to emerge, boosting the numbers. However, I felt it of benefit to detail both analyses as further evidence of the prevalent discourses. Because of the reliance on electronic methods in the previous part of the study, it was not possible to ascertain the amount of articles in *The Sun* or *The Mail* in 1996 on education. These were therefore excluded from analysis.

² Note that coverage analysed here focuses on one story only, excluding the full extent of coverage on each topic area.

and *Times* and the lack of space awarded to minority issues in the tabloids, particularly the different news values of *The Sun*.

Table 4.2: Articles analysed by topic.

Topic	No of articles
Sarwar (Politics and criminality)	54
Fundamentalism	33
Education	17 (+31)*
Blasphemy (Rushdie and freedom of speech)	16
Relationships	8
Total	128=159

*Bracketed figure = articles examined from 1996.

Table 4.3: Articles analysed by paper.

Newspaper	No of articles
<i>The Times/ST</i>	45 (+18)= 63
<i>The Guardian/Observer</i>	56 (+13)= 69
<i>The Mail/MoS</i> ³	20
<i>The Sun</i>	7
Total	128(+31)= 159

However, despite a relative consistency in what is considered newsworthy in relation to Islam, there are variations between papers (Table 4.4). All papers followed the 'Sarwar saga',⁴ a political scandal involving the first British Muslim MP and the New Labour government, resonating highly in the news values of crime and politics. *The Guardian* paid particular attention to the religious discrimination laws, understandable given its liberal position on freedom of speech. However, its attention to fundamentalism is a greater surprise.

Table 4.4: Number of articles covered on each story by paper.

Topic Newspaper	Sarwar	Fundamentalism	Education	Blasphemy	Relationships	Total
<i>Times</i>	23	9	8(+18)=26	2	3	63
<i>Guardian</i>	18	19	6(+13)=19	11	2	69
<i>Mail</i>	8	5	1	3	3	20
<i>Sun</i>	5	0	2	0	0	7
Total	54	33	17(+31)=48	16	8	159

³ Note that *The Mail* uses the derogatory term 'Moslem/s' throughout.

⁴ As coined by John Arlidge in *The Observer*, 25 May 1997.

Hard news tends to appear as news reports; politics, crime and conflict (Sarwar and fundamentalism) (Table 4.5). At this point in time, the story of Sarah Cook was concluding and had already been editorialised in its early stages. What is significant about these figures is that blasphemy and education are commented on to a greater degree, in the form of editorials and letters. This is evidence that they are more contested issues, areas of debate where newspapers are keen to influence people as to their perspective. *The Times* is keen to secure consent on its views about educational provision, *The Guardian* regarding laws restricting freedom of speech. The other topics covered here are more distant from the British context in terms of cultural proximity, particularly fundamentalism and relationships. This produces a consensus amongst a wider diversity of groups. There is, therefore, a general agreement between papers on how these events should be interpreted, according to national norms (and is the reason for less comment on these issues). Variation in the Sarwar coverage tends to be based on partisan criterion.

Table 4.5: Number of articles by type covered by each paper on each topic.⁵

	Sarwar			Education			Fundamentalism			Blasphemy			Rel
	Ns	Ed	Let	Ns	Ed	Let	Ns	Ed	Let	Ns	Ed	Let	Ns
Ts	17	4	2	3	2	3	7	-	-	1	1	-	3
Gn	17	1	-	2	-	1	9	2	5	3	2	6	2
MI	7	1	-	-	-	1	4	-	1	3	-	-	3
Sn	3	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
N	44	8	2	5	4	5	20	2	6	7	3	6	8

Key: Ns= News report Ed=editorial Let=letter.
Ts=*Times* Gn=*Guardian* MI=*Mail* Sn=*Sun*

What becomes increasingly evident throughout this chapter is that the legitimization of the Muslim community through legal means is an issue which a number of competing groups struggle to attain hegemony over. Out of all these articles, however, only 8.8% of the 159 and 8.5% of the 128 articles can be described as being outwardly **supportive** towards Muslims. Out of the 14 positive articles, 53% are letters, 21% news items and only 7% editorial. It is evident, then, that the newspapers themselves make negative evaluations of events involving Muslims whilst using letters (which people may take less notice of when competing with the authority of the paper) for balance. Sixty-nine per cent of these were in *The Guardian*, 23% in *The Times*, 7.6% in both *The Mail* and *The Sun*. Forty-six per cent of supportive articles were about education. In *The Guardian*'s coverage of education, 52%

⁵ *The Guardian* also includes 3 features on education, 1 on fundamentalism. Both broadsheets also feature 2 reviews on fundamentalism, included in relation to the feature.

of articles were either supportive or balanced, 23% of *The Times* coverage. *The Guardian's* coverage of the blasphemy debate was 27% supportive or at least balanced and 26% of its coverage of fundamentalism. All other coverage, except for that on Sarwar could be described as either critical or negativises Muslims. The reason for leaving Sarwar out of this analysis is because although most articles could be said to be critical of Sarwar, it is not possible to say they are outwardly critical of Muslims. These articles also contain counter discourses within them but could not be said to be balanced. However, only two articles can be said to be wholly supportive of Sarwar (an editorial in *The Sun*, its only positive article, and a letter in *The Times*).

An analysis of the headlines shows that predictably, those subjects which have clear participants such as relationships, politics and fundamentalism are actor focal. These are also subjects where there is less contestation in the discourse. Blame is clearly attributed in these cases, whilst blasphemy and education contain a greater amount of nominalisations and passive constructs and focus more on processes than participants. The ethnic signifier 'Muslim' however rarely appears in the headlines, only 8 times and mainly in *The Guardian*. Where there is a foreign element, this is often used, (eg. Turk), in fundamentalism and relationships, otherwise signifiers denoting the debate are used (blasphemy and education), and Sarwar himself is most likely to be topicalised.

This quantitative information already goes some way to establishing how these stories are constructed in the different newspapers. The qualitative analysis confirms and expands on the findings of the quantitative project. I will now examine the macrosemantic content of each topic which characterises the representation of Muslims.⁶

Relationships

Stories involving relationships covered in 1997 follow a similar pattern to previous years. Mainly involving the relationships of non-Muslims with Muslims, often elites, and following conversion, they include speculation over the relationships of the Princess of Wales, the Khan's marriage which is increasingly seen to be under strain and John Birt's son (who converted following a relationship). Due to the celebrity focus of these stories, this is one topic relating to Islam which is highly likely to be featured in the tabloids. Items involving non-elites include stories of 'Shirley Valentines' who have married Muslims

⁶ See Appendix c for glossary of discourse terms.

abroad and consequently had to flee from their brutality. The single feature where both partners were Muslims focused on their feelings with regard to an impending arranged marriage (*The Mail*).

I chose to cover the story of Sarah Cook due to its development from the previous year. This focuses on the relationship of a 13 year old girl from Essex and a Turkish waiter, Musa Komeagac, who met on holiday, got married and had a baby. She was made a Ward of Court and sent back to Britain whilst he was charged with having unlawful sex and arranging an unofficial religious ceremony by the Turkish courts.

Coverage of the story in this year included; firstly her decision to remain in Britain, secondly his punishment in the Turkish courts and finally his second marriage to a Turkish Muslim. *The Observer* breaks the story (August), the marriage breakdown, covered by *The Mail* and *The Times* the following day. *The Mail* and *The Times* then cover all aspects of it, his punishment for the 'illegal' ceremony (October) and his second wedding (December). *The Guardian* covers only the court judgement. This item is not covered in *The Sun*, surprising given its typical tabloid constituents; the associations of sex, crime with the Other. *The Sun*, which bought the initial story from Sarah Cook's parents following the marriage, would therefore appear to have a number of reasons for running it. Yet, it is covered by the broadsheets, an illustration of their increasing tabloidisation.

The coverage of relationships is characterised by an Orientalist discourse relating to sexual deviance, primitivism, gender, generation, illegality, immorality and perfidy (fraudulent faith) which formulate a meta-discourse of cultural incompatibility.⁷

Sexual deviance/Generation

Sarah's age is significant in the newsworthiness of this item. Thus, all papers categorise her lexically as a 'schoolgirl' and 'Child Bride'. These labels feature in 5 of the 8 headlines so can be considered as important in defining the event for the audience, packaging these ideas with conceptual solidity and memorability, important in cognitive processing (van Dijk, 1991). In the first *Mail* article, Sarah is referred to as a schoolgirl 4 times and her age is cited 5 times. By classifying her in such a way, the articles appeal to a consensus regarding child abuse, which allows her to be subject to State action. His nationality (and age, 18) allows this to be constructed through a discourse of deviant and

⁷ These are not presented in any particular order, the layering of interacting meanings makes them difficult to separate.

excessive sexuality harking back to historical constructions of the Arab Harem, prevalent in the cruelty and suppression she is subject to. He is therefore subject to a form of fetishism whereby he is reduced to an essential (corrupt) sexuality endemic of 'the primal fantasy...(of black sexuality which) projects the fear of a threat not only to white womanhood, but to civilisation itself, as the anxiety of miscegenation, eugenic pollution and racial denigration' (Mercer, 1994: 85). These anxieties are then dissipated by his 'failed sexuality' in her ultimate rejection of him (Said, 1978: 315).

This sexual deviance is confirmed by the final article in *The Mail* when he marries again. He has now married 'secretly' to 'the daughter of a prostitute' without his parents knowledge who have threatened to disown him. References to his 'latest' and almost as 'controversial' marriage confirms his 'natural' status as a consistent offender.

Cultural clash

This macroproposition is expressed both explicitly and implicitly. The caption: 'Culture Clash' appears in *The Mail* beneath photographs twice, making explicit the inferred meaning to be read from the article. The incompatibility of the two cultures is also signalled by time with regard to the duration of and inevitable demise of the relationship, 'she proved the sceptics right'. The marriage is declared as 'Over' in all three initial headlines. The texts work to reinforce and fix these conditions by the use of definite terminology, she 'vowed', she will 'never go back'. This is contrast to his state of 'bewilderment', further adding to his apparent weakness (see failed sexuality).

The cultural clash is constructed through a number of binary oppositions in the texts:

Freedom Vs Constraint: Constructed through a discourse regarding the treatment of women. This is achieved by references to her 'imprisonment' compared to her comfortable 'suburban home in Essex' and forefronting quotes from Sarah saying 'it wasn't the life for me'. That she felt 'like an old woman rather than a teenager' is highlighted by a presentational strategy of bold typography.

Muslim clothing is designated as symbolic of these restrictions (referred to in all articles); 'I feel freer....I'm much happier now' she insisted'. *The Guardian* describes how 'she has reverted to Western clothes'. The relations between propositions here establishes this as a positive move and results in a negative inference by 'but (she) is still a practising Muslim'. The most visible signifier of difference, Sarah is veiled in 6 of the 7 pictures of her. The veil signifies patriarchal Islam rather than as many Muslim women feel, a factor in their

freedom (Holt, 1996).⁸ However, whilst the representation of Muslim women internationally is dominated by the heavy black hijab (and are thereby reduced to its significations: objectified and eroticised within male-centred fantasies, a gendering discourse associated with historical views of Arabs and the harem), British Muslim women, as here, tend to be dressed in regular clothing with the addition of a headscarf. This signifies their status as incomplete Muslims, their state of conversion represents transience as opposed to the absolute, permanent and threatening nature of the full hijab. This functions to delineate a line between the 'exotic' and the British subject, allowing the papers to overcome the problematic issue of conversion and readers to empathise with her (less alienating). Sarah certainly looks uncomfortable in her headscarf and her release from it confirms its fleeting status. Thus, Sarah's sexuality is suppressed and displaced to him to ensure the continuance of this racialised discourse (Hall, 1997b; Gilman, 1985; Mercer, 1994). This characterisation of the woman in terms of her relation to a man is typical of the 'female paradigm' within which the Muslim woman is represented (Fowler, 1991). However, a further difference with coverage of the British convert is the agency given to the British participant. This can be determined by an examination of the syntactic process in the transitivity of clauses (see Appendix c). An examination of the initial headlines shows Sarah as the syntactic agent in leaving him, 'Child bride says marriage is over' (*The Times*, 12 Aug.). Or he is subject to the actions of the authorities, 'Child bride's Turkish husband fined £5' (*The Guardian*, 10 Oct.). However, when the associated actions become negative, he becomes the central agent, 'Turk weds again' (*The Times*, 24 Dec). She was, therefore, the passive victim of his negative actions (in previous coverage) until she is proactive in ending the relationship. This occurrence in the sequence of events and Sarah's attitude to it is ideologically closer to the papers' views on the relationship, meeting their initial expectations. This is illustrated by the forefronting of Sarah's quotes whilst marginalising his to the end of the article or undermining them with cynicism. *The Mail* is more forceful in portraying her autonomy in the first article. By the second, '£5 fine for the Turkish waiter who got English girl, 13, pregnant', the syntactic complexity draws attention to his liability and identifies her as the victim once more.⁹ The photographs anchor the meaning in terms of dissatisfaction with the

⁸ Other depictions symbolise her status before the event. Dressed in school uniform and exhibiting displeasure, they represent her insecurity, reinforced by textual references to her ugliness and having suffered from bullying. This has the effect of reproducing assumptions that women embrace Islam out of fear and vulnerability (Holt, 1996).

⁹ The facticity working to neutralise the ideology.

outcome. Sarah, to the left of the page, looks on to the text discontented, Musa, to the right looks on, smiling. *The Guardian* and *The Times*, however, give Sarah less responsibility for actions, emphasising the enforced culture by implying she was at the will of the Komeagacs, converting 'at the family's request'. The syntactical structure of these clauses emphasise her subject position, 'Komeagac, who married Sarah in Turkey', 'she was returned to GB'. By rendering her helpless in this way, the papers reinforce her status as a child, making the abuse more explicit.

Significant in this headline is his categorisation as a 'Turkish waiter'. One of these two terms is used by all papers to define him in nearly every single instance. This has two effects: as a waiter, he is defined by his menial, low status occupation and is seen to have abused a position of trust. This 'overcompleteness', adding extraneous detail, is also illustrated by the continued attention by the papers to how they met, a holiday romance, which functions to devalue the nature and feelings experienced in the relationship (van Dijk, 1991: 185). His Turkishness allows his actions to be attributed to his 'natural' disposition. However, these are displaced to his Muslimness¹⁰ by the negative evaluations of his behaviour by the Turkish authorities. This label does, however, appeal to xenophobic tendencies, further marginalising his perspective.

Rationality Vs Irrationality: this is evident both in the implication that Sarah has regained her sanity after a bout of momentary madness and by denigrating the Turkish legal system. That normality (by press standards) has been restored is symbolically illustrated in terms of clothing; 'Gone is the Moslem clothing...Back in Essex, she is once again'. The inadequacies of the legal system are made manifest by focusing on the length of the trial, indicating it has 'dragged on' and by expressing dissatisfaction with the punishment Musa received, the focus of the second article. Both *The Mail* and *The Guardian* consider his punishment 'a trifling amount even by the standards of a provincial village. The court had decided that there was no unlawful sex despite intercourse with under 15's being illegal in Turkey'.

Morality Vs Immorality: all the articles express a morality based on an ethnocentric perspective of the event which makes assumptions and reproduces an institutional discourse about what is right and wrong. Thus, the papers establish a consensus around specific norms relating to sexual relationships. This is expressed by emphasising the **illegality** of the

¹⁰ Halliday, 1996.

marriage, it was 'never officially recognised in either country' and 'merely religious' (as opposed to civil law), stressing a lack of importance. The papers reinforce the unofficial nature of the marriage by putting inverted commas around the words 'husband', 'bride' and 'marriage'. *The Times* defines the sexual relationship as 'rape' in its final headline. By referring to the fine imposed on both the Imam and Musa's father, *The Mail* reinforces the illegal context.

Running throughout these macrosemantics is a discourse of **primitivism** based on what are deemed to be backward cultural practices. This allows for the reification of Western values which are presented as common-sensical. This is achieved through specific lexical choices which address the audience inclusively as 'we', 'It was a marriage which *defied belief* and *shocked* the nation' (emphasis added). By referring to widespread outrage, the ideology becomes naturalised. When this consensus appears to be broken, as in the conduct of Sarah's parents who supported the marriage and her father's conversion to Islam, it is constructed as aberrant, achieved by the papers by setting up a division between the sensible majority and irresponsible few.¹¹

Part of the rhetorical strategy the papers use to prefer a dominant reading is in the characterisation of Musa. We have seen that he is the agent of negative actions and thus subject to penalization by the authorities. As well as being oppressive and abusive, he is depicted as unsupportive towards his son, sending 'just £180 to support 10-month Mohammad'. This selfishness, particular with regard to money, is a discursive construction that will reappear in the analysis of further topics. Any indication of behaviour which may counter this construction, such as Musa's declarations that he will return to England to be with his family, are quickly undermined by the negative expectations of an expert on his unlikely ability to acquire a visa. This is also seen as being forced upon her. Quotation marks are used to distance his remarks from the views of the paper, 'Those who accused us will be ashamed'. His consistent belief that they will be re-united is set against her more definite and prominent pronouncements that it is over (*The Mail*, 10 Oct.). The subsequent

¹¹ My definition of consensus being, as with Fowler (1991: 49), 'consensus assumes that, for a given grouping of people, it is a matter of fact that the interests of the whole population are undivided, held in common.'

second marriage provides global coherence to the story, as evidence for the shallowness of his comments.¹²

That the explanatory factor for these events is Musa's Muslimness is constructed through the local coherence of propositions within the articles. By detailing Islamic clothes, ritual and belief, the articles provide a cultural register insinuating religious motives. An example of this is by quoting Musa saying 'Before Allah and my people I am proved clean' (*The Mail*, Oct.). This statement juxtaposed against the trial, illegality and punishment and the derogatory evaluations of the newspapers, negativises Muslim belief. That these values are deemed to be Islamic (rather than attributed to traditional patriarchal cultural practices) is also constructed through the religious ceremony, illegal in Turkey. The condemnation by his own people allows the papers to reject racist motives in their portrayal.

However, the religious absolutism that is expressed here, in adherence to strict cultural practices, is undermined by a further significant discourse: that of perfidiousness. Muslims' dogmatism in following a strict religious code is confuted by their criminal, immoral behaviour. As fraudulent Muslims, their adherence to Islam is presumed to be motivated by manipulative reasons. An explicit example of this is when Sarah asks of Musa 'What sort of Muslim are you?' (*The Times*). She, a British convert, is seen to be morally superior to him. This also works to neutralise the ideology by attributing it to the focal actor as an evaluative statement in the form of a question.

There is little variation in coverage between papers on this topic. All papers highlight the same details, agency and quotes. Global coherence is provided between articles by duplicating and forefronting the same 'facts' regarding the unlawfulness of the event and his negative actions: her imprisonment, the trial for illicit sex, the illegal ceremony and his lack of support for the baby. Existing quotes are repeatedly employed, rather than presuming previous knowledge, a common news convention, this functions to secure the reading around a single ideological position.

The conformity in this instance, even in *The Guardian*, can be related to norms concerning the exploitation of underage girls by older men. However, concern for the victim cannot be seen as the primary motive for this coverage given the number of juvenile relationships, teenage pregnancies and oppressed wives that go unreported in Britain and

¹² 'Global' and 'local' take on different meanings in discourse analysis (see Appendix c). In this chapter global coherence is the general coherence of the story across articles and local coherence, the coherence of facts within a specific article.

the hypocrisy in the use of sex by tabloids to sell papers. Fears regarding the rise of teenage sexuality in Britain have been displaced in this case to problematise his Muslimness as a reason for behaviour. It is the religious (and foreign) aspect which allows for the combination of exotic cultural practices and crime that gives this story its news value.

Differences, then, occur in terms of rhetoric and style with *The Mail* allocating extra space, details and visual support to its articles, its message being more explicit through the use of dramatic lexicalisation. However, the journalistic modality is explicit in all papers despite these articles consisting solely of news items, an example of the strong ideological concordance. The papers also use different strategies to achieve similar outcomes, for example, *The Times* emphasises the conflict between the couple (as found in the quantitative results) whereas *The Mail* puts a greater distance between them, an attempt to signify relations in their finality. Both *The Guardian* and *The Times* try to create an appearance of balance by including another perspective (albeit briefly). However they distance themselves from these views by explicitly identifying their source and through lexical and syntactical structural choices, 'much of the Islamic press in Turkey claimed that the authorities in Britain were motivated not by concern for Sarah's welfare but by anger that the girl had rejected her Western upbringing' (*The Times*).

The only other reference to this topic is in *The Mail on Sunday*, 18th May, in a *Travel Mail* item on Turkey. The story of Sarah Cook became associated with Turkey along with its discourse. The story is used to introduce the feature but, due to the criterion of selling holidays, the stereotypes formulated in the initial story are introduced but then replaced by others, 'Child Bride? The young Turks here prefer football...'. Western females are again the dominant agents, seeking pleasure, not marriage. Although the waiters are presented as predatory, this is firmly placed within the context of traditional Muslim family values with parents maintaining control. This is an example of the approval of Muslim values when they are in accordance with British majority values. Their passivity (and inferiority) is reinforced by the idea that the men are no match for the English girls. The discourse is set within a leisure framework but reiterates the stereotypes of the Muslim threat in order to dispel them for economic reasons. The discourse therefore has less moral overtones and is more light-hearted.

Despite efforts to separate the discourse off for analysis, those mentioned here are overlapping. An example of this is morality. The discourse employed in relation to deviant

cultural practices: gender, generation, primitivism, fraudulence, economic, allows for a meta-discourse of immorality to be inferred. The synergy between the discourses within this coverage gives them greater strength and increases their 'reality', making it harder for competing discourses to gain assent.

Coverage of conversion represents both a fear of Islam as an expansionary force (despite the main reason for its growth in Europe being migration, Halliday, 1996) and an attempt to fix the boundaries between what are considered to be mutually exclusive categories: Muslim and Briton. Those who have converted are not treated as 'real' Muslims and coverage is constructed so as to indicate their return to British values forthwith. Coverage of relationships works to highlight exotic cultural practices (which from an ethnocentric perspective are deemed negative) thus enhancing the superiority of the nation.

Education

Education, as an agent of socialisation, is a principle element in the transmission of culture and values between generations. According to Gilroy (1988), it has thus become a battle ground for the protection of national culture as minority groups are conceived as making an assault on this. To Muslims, education is an issue of empowerment, cultural autonomy, identity and acceptance (BMMS, 5, 10, 1997).¹³ The Westernisation of Muslim youth, as the youngest of all population groups in the UK, raises further concerns regarding secular education (Townsend, 1971; Modood et al, 1994; Nielsen, 1989, 1991b, 1992; Raza, 1993). Thus, since the mid 1980s Muslim groups have become increasingly visible in this arena, lobbying for changes within the system. At the time of analysis (1996/7), the policies in question were those relating to the teaching of Religious Education. Reforms by the Conservative government, marginalising the multicultural agenda of the past by re-centring Christianity, to Muslims, was representative of their place in the education system as peripheral. This led to direct action, in this case, a boycott of Religious Education lessons (Birmingham, January). However, the failure of these actions in articulating Muslim positions and achieving their goals, Nielsen (1991a) suggests, has led to a recognition that these can only be achieved outside the system. There has therefore been a shift in attention by lobby groups from internal reform to the funding of Muslim schools.

¹³ However, I do not wish to insinuate this issue is of equal importance to all Muslims, according Muslims a lack of divergence that the press is guilty of on this issue. The tendency here, to represent Muslims as 'aggregates of people', reads unsympathetically and weakens their case for reform (Fowler, 1991).

Press coverage of education can therefore be seen as having been pushed onto the agenda by minorities themselves as the press react to the measures taken by them and to Government attempts at resolutions. However, Muslim groups' ability to influence further than this have been limited, as the core of the British press have interpreted the situation as an attack on traditional white majority values and reporting has been defensive. This struggle has therefore led to the 'battleground' whereby competing discourses are played out and individual papers attempt to fix preferred solutions based on their own ideological positions. Rather than merely to be conceived as a struggle regarding the place of Muslims in the education system, I would argue that this topic provides a microcosm of the British societal context. Questions regarding national identity and the place of Muslims within this proliferate as the British model of incorporation of its minorities, 'multiculturalism', is in crisis. The funding of Muslim schools, then, is symbolic of the legitimization of Muslims into the political and public space.

The key first-order discourses to be found in coverage of education include nation, history, morality, economy, integration and absolutism. This construction gives expression to the second-order discourses of anti (anti)-racism, irrationality, illegality and homogeneity.

Analysis of the two key issues; Religious Education and funding, in 1996, uncovered 31 articles from *The Times* and *Guardian*; 80.6% of which were about Religious Education, 9.6% about funding for Muslim schools and 9.6% covered a story about a Muslim school teacher who interrupted carol singing to criticise pupils for betraying their faith (the press used the more severe term 'castigate'). In 1997, these were the main topics of coverage in just 17 articles in all four papers analysed (see Table 4.6). The lower amount in 1997 and the initial increase in 1998 (see p. 230) is an indication of how events become news. These issues had obviously not become less important for Muslims in 1997, who continued to lobby the government. When the government took action in 1998, Muslim schools became news again. There is evidence here to suggest that Muslims' own actions in this area have a greater chance of becoming news when they are (interpreted as) controversial or negative (such as the boycott of lessons, 1996, where discussion on the event and surrounding issues extended for three months over 15 articles in *The Times* and four months over 10 articles in *The Guardian*). These actions can then be framed as illegitimate as opposed to the official discourse of the government and press (see Sources, p. 221).

Table 4.6: Number of articles on education by paper, 1997.

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Sun</i>	Total
RE	1	2	0	2	4
Funding	5	6	1	0	12
Total	6	8	1	2	17

Coverage in 1997 begins in *The Guardian* in January which features two articles focusing on the application for state funding by the Islamia school in Brent and surrounding issues. This issue is not raised again except in relation to other events; the closing of a Catholic school in May and experiments in the UK with American practices of separate schooling on racial lines. *The Times* only introduces the issue in late May. This news report is followed in early June by two negative and one balanced letters and an article reporting on OFSTED criticisms of a Muslim school. In December, a more balanced article reporting that 'Muslim schools may sue Labour' belies the political motive of insinuating that education is suffering under the Labour government.

Commentary on Religious Education in *The Times* and *The Sun* in this year, follows government policy initiatives on assemblies. *The Guardian*'s coverage of RE pursues issues raised following events in the previous year. *The Mail*'s lone (positive) letter in December appears in response to a letter from the previous day which criticises Britain for being too tolerant in harbouring Muslim extremists in relation to the recent massacre in Israel. The active featuring and denigrating of events by *The Times* and to some extent *The Sun* compared to the disinterest of *The Mail* and more balanced approach of *The Guardian* is an indication that the 'consensus' in this instance (as opposed to the previous topic) cannot be taken for granted. Each paper must therefore try and establish its own unity of values but the variation between group norms present in this debate testifies to the struggle to establish this. All papers have to therefore work hard to establish a consensus where it is clearly not apparent. The strategies of argumentation used by each paper to do this will now be elucidated further.

The Times

Coverage of this topic reveals specific beliefs about the paper's model of education and society and the appropriate accommodation of minorities within it. Prevalent in *The Times*' discourse is an integrationist, anti-multiculturalist, moralising approach. Britain is assumed to be a Christian country which schools must reflect. The action of Muslims is

considered divisive and the standards of their schooling poor. *The Times* therefore uses the boycott to disparage the current multicultural state of RE and advocate a return to Christian values. Thus, the situation is referred to as 'an unhappy commentary' on multi-faith teaching, 'a challenge to the future of our multicultural society' (David Charter, 23/2/96).¹⁴

Part of the argumentation strategy of *The Times* is to suggest the lack of spirituality of the country has led to a decline in morality. It uses a quote by Dr Nick Tate, the Government's main curriculum adviser, warning that Great Britain was 'far advanced towards becoming a religiously illiterate society' and criticises the 'secular liberalism of the West which declines to defend absolute values' (23/2/96). The global coherence between articles leaves one with a feeling that Muslims are responsible for the moral disintegration. Lexical items such as 'muddle', 'mish-mash', 'indoctrination', 'instruction', 'values/ morals' illustrate the confusion and debate around RE.

According to *The Times*, 'this country is not Muslim' (Susan Elkin, 3/3/96). It consistently reinforces the Education Act which states that RE 'must reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions' (23/2/96). This is also used to augment the illegitimacy of Muslim action. When the Educational Institute of Scotland calls for a change to the law that requires assemblies to be comprised of a broadly Christian character, the commentary appeals to Scotland's identity as a Christian country arguing that the plans 'deny our history' (8/6/97). It appropriates all the arguments supporting secular or multi-faith assemblies and refutes them on the basis of the common sense of the majority culture. It alludes to a particular nostalgic view of Britain located in past times. It is therefore dismissive of other religious traditions, referring in the article to 'Islam or Hinduism or whatever', lumping them all into one category of little importance.

To support its argumentation, *The Times* presents Muslims as irrational and uncompromising. This can be seen in the individual discrediting of a Muslim teacher who interrupted carol singing in assembly. The reporting forefronts quotes of children and parents who were upset by the 'outburst'; 'Ever since he'd been here, he'd been preaching Islam to us when he should have been teaching maths' (19/12/96). This is followed by a letter from a Muslim, congratulating the teacher, which argues 'we are unapologetically very obstinate in following Islam (Karim Chowdhury, 30/12/96). Another letter refers to

¹⁴ Although the nature of multiculturalism and its substance in the UK is not debated.

'the thoughtless actions of a religious zealot' (Om P. Midha, 30/12/96). The relations between these articles frame the meaning (disapproval). This ethnocentric discourse of *The Times*, then, formulates expressions of cultural identity as irrational absolutism. Muslim activity is trivialised further by reducing their concerns to that of a schoolground squabble. This denies structural discrimination and places the blame on the community. Thus, there is an over-lexicalisation of semantic concepts relating to confrontation which creates a division between 'them' and 'us' and works to foreclose any discussion of alternative interpretations and reform: 'controversy', 'waging' a 'battle', 'frustration', 'squabbles', 'dispute', 'row', 'failure', 'arguments', 'segregation', 'separate', 'withdraw'.

In terms of the funding of Muslim schools, *The Times* supports the status quo, arguing that such a move would encourage separatism. This is illustrated in a letter from an OFSTED inspector who argues that the separate teaching of girls leads to them to be 'inculcated into a traditional way of life' which prevents them from integrating into British society. This makes negative assumptions about what a traditional life consists of and is in opposition to British tradition to which *The Times* frequently appeals to establish its consensus. The umbrella headline which encompasses the 3 letters, 'Tradition bars way to funding' also implies that belief (and practice) is the reason for action by Muslims and appropriate non-action by government. A discourse of ethnic blame prevails; 'If the Muslim community could show that they do not handicap their daughters in that way, my view would change' (3/6/97). This is typical of a right-wing strategy in proclaiming egalitarian motives to protect the balance of power (their tolerance juxtaposed against Muslim intolerance).

The ideology of consensus appeals here to government as well as readership. *The Times* wants government intervention, and refers to Muslims as 'being allowed segregated Religious Education'. The headline 'Shephard refuses to order inspection of Muslim lessons' includes the implicit proposition that they need to be and is harder to refute in this format than a straightforward statement. It suggests the Government has 'caved in' to Muslim demands (Wark, 25/2/96). It refers to these 'squabbles' as 'hindering the development of British schools' (23/2/96). This demonstrates a key strategy in this ethnocentric discourse, appealing to economy on the basis of limited resources.

Another strategy that *The Times* uses is to draw attention to the poor standards in Muslim schools. It consistently refers to previous rejections for state funding which begs the

question why? (25/5/97). Although it mentions only twice that these schools may foster fundamentalism, there is some emphasis on Muslims as demanding and threatening. Om Midha Gosforth refers to 'the veiled threat' of the Muslim community to Labour if they fail to meet their demands (3/6/97). The threat is also perceived in terms of numbers as 'Muslims set to outnumber Anglicans' which is framed in the context of Britain as a Christian country (Michael Fake, 3/6/97). The conditions in Muslim schools are 'a threat to pupils' health and safety' (7/6/97). These articles focusing on the un-hygienic, unclean conditions within Muslim schools, recommending government action, implicitly suggests primitivism, that Muslims do not care about their own children and this requires outside intervention. These articles suggest that Muslim tradition (beliefs), which are not up to (judged by) British standards, should not be legitimated by being awarded official status.

The Sun

Following on from *The Times*, *The Sun* occupies a similar ideological position but has less need to create an impression of balance or work as hard to persuade readers, assuming a stronger consensus. Although its coverage, therefore, is limited to two editorials about RE, only one explicitly referring to Muslims, its message is remarkably clear. Through a rhetorical and authoritative style it constructs its argument establishing Britain as a Christian country. The current state of RE, then, has betrayed British children. Its editorial voice is both appealing and directive, '**Christians should never be shy about proclaiming their faith**', reassuring people about the right way to think. Its construction of 'us' as the white Christian majority is achieved in several ways. Rather than using the symbol of a Muslim girl with her headscarf (most commonly used for this topic), *The Sun* deploys a picture of a young white girl praying. The picture symbolises sweetness and innocence in our hands, she represents 'our own' children who form the core culture of Britain and this interacts with the headline '**The betrayal of Christianity in our schools**'. It therefore establishes a form of reversal racism whereby 'our' British traditions and social institutions are under attack; we 'learn about Hindu and Muslim festivals at the expense of Christian ones'.

The Sun attacks white groups who are agents of left-wing propaganda, RE is 'a politically correct multi-faith mish-mash' and it appeals to the Government not to play into the hands of 'trendy teachers'. The current situation is declared 'illegal', as the law is interpreted as 'instruction into Christian values'. Its claims to be a guardian of Christian

values is hypocritical when the paper has a secular outlook, subjecting stories about religion to ridicule. Identification with Christianity is reinforced as a defence mechanism, described by *The Sun* as 'the very soul of the nation' (see p. 227).

Part of the agenda of this article is an anti-Conservative campaign, written following the election of the New Labour government whom *The Sun* supported. It discredits the previous Government's policy towards RE by using 'an expert' to criticise it. (Although in the next breath, it appeals to the common sense of the average man by rubbishing the 'nonsense' of 'experts'). It therefore serves as a warning from the paper to the present Government to act in majority interests if it is to retain the support of the people (and paper). The article opens with **'School children are to be given lessons in morality, Prime Minister Tony Blair has pledged'** but closes with the imperative; 'He must act quickly before it is too late'.

This article illustrates how editorials interpret events according to their specific ideologies using consensus-building strategies, in this case appealing to values of morality, history (Christian) and nation, which aided by presentational elements and strong modal expression, culminates in a call for action. Thus, it is an expression of a social process, reproducing an ethnic consensus in order to restore the status quo (Trew, 1979). In this case, then, it should be seen as a manifestation of socially shared dominant ideologies rather than personal opinion (van Dijk, 1991). The strength of its strategy and brevity ensures closure around this perspective. In this format, Muslims are just one of a number of groups of people who do not deserve any special treatment but should be excluded from full participation in society in the interests of the majority.

The Guardian

As Said (1978: 118) has argued previously of *The Guardian*, it has greater 'sympathetic identification' to minorities than other papers. However, he suggested that its more negative attitude towards Muslims was based on a human rights philosophy which saw Islam as a social evil. Equally, in its coverage of education, it is unable to reconcile its stance on secular education with Muslim demands for religious separatism. Its overall strategy is to appeal to a rational Enlightenment view of history which aims to elevate non-denominational education over any form of religious instruction. Thus, *The Guardian* is equally unhappy with the current state of RE which it describes as 'as clear as mud' (27/3/96). This, for *The Guardian*, creates 'an unease about religious instruction' whereby

'Fundamentalist Christians could also jump on the bandwagon' (25/2/96). *The Guardian*, therefore, supports a pluralist approach, providing an example of how the current system should work, 'successfully balancing the needs of the syllabus and the local community', (9/4/96), consistently reinforcing the idea that 'education should not turn itself into propaganda' (11/2/96). The current situation in Birmingham, then, like *The Times*, is considered illegal, as the school has 'gone against government guidelines' in 'abandoning National Curriculum rules' (5/2/96) and is 'against the law' (11/2/96).

However, in its support for balanced secularism, it constructs Muslim demands as uncompromising and irrational which it describes in even a fairly positive article as 'the Islamic proscription' (21/1/97). It treats the case of the Muslim teacher who objected to Muslim pupils singing carols identically to *The Times* (19/12/96). It reports on the boycott within a similar (to *The Times*) linguistic register of conflict and confusion. There are elements in its discourse which assumes the norm is Christian when it refers to the teaching of 'non-Christian faiths' (5/1/97).

However, in relation to both RE and Muslim schools, *The Guardian* features the Muslim perspective more, referring to parents', 'fears', 'grievances', 'discontent', 'unease'. When this does occur though, the situation is conceived as a problem. These conflicting discourses within *The Guardian* are illustrated in two features on funding, 21/1/97. Bruck (1989) suggests that features as 'soft news' can more readily include accounts from unofficial and less credible sources. The longer length and 'human' angle also allows alternative perspectives and some of the complexities of the debate to be aired. This is evident even if the 'whole structure' of the article is 'designed to discredit it as a political argument' (Schlesinger et al, 1983: 91). This format is apparent in both these features. One of these is written by a Muslim, Fazil Malik, who forefronts the alienation and cynicism of the community, regarding the 'proposed support' which is 'too little too late' (repeated twice in the article). However, whilst quoting different factions of the community, he distances himself from these saying 'There are many in the community who find it contradictory to teach Islam and adopt the 'secular' national curriculum simultaneously...although they think nothing wrong in accepting government funding'. The connective here raises questions regarding double standards and economic gain prevalent in the discourse of fraudulence which, expressed by a Muslim, cannot be labelled racism. This is juxtaposed alongside a fairly positive article on the Islamia school in Brent, whose work is

praised, but once again undermined by 'but there is room for significant improvement' (Kingston, 21/1/97). This is the only article where Muslims are treated inclusively as 'British'. These two features are united by the headline 'Living in Harmony'. This type of nominalisation in headlines on education, where agency is ambiguous, is typical and adds to the confusion and constant ideological slippage in this paper. This headline's presupposition contradicts the content of the articles whereby the situation for both Muslims, the majority population and the Government is seen to be problematic, alluding to the difficulty of accommodating Muslims, with their specific religious identities, in a country *The Guardian* desires to be plural but secular (11/2/96).¹⁵

Other examples of counter discourse in *The Guardian* include highlighting the 'valuable contribution' of the community, and criticising the Government, it 'should be recognised and funded by the government' (27/2/96, 28/12/96). These also tend to be undermined by subsequent and overall coverage alluding to the 'serious weaknesses' in the teaching at Muslim schools. It also raises questions as to why schools have been rejected previously, alluding to standards and their backward associations. This questioning strategy which appears to provide 'balance' in the articles is a common method by which *The Guardian* incorporates its underlying ideologies. For example, a positive article on the adoption of a US initiative providing separate schooling for black children to raise their achievement (and refers to the Muslim situation) includes the implicit proposition that single faith schools promote racial segregation (16/12/97).

For *The Guardian*, then, institutions within society are secular and religion should be a purely private matter. This philosophy excludes Muslims from the public sphere and represents them as irrational and uncompromising; 'It is perfectly possible to identify with two cultures: a common civic, British culture. But that common culture is crucial because without it there is no reason for minorities to compromise their sometimes mutually incompatible demands' (11/2/96). However, due to its sympathy for minorities, the struggle in the social domain is reproduced in the discourse.

Counter discourse

Elements of counter discourses are prevalent in all papers except *The Sun* but, as we have seen, are more evident in *The Guardian*. *The Times* includes one commentary which

¹⁵ There is an element here in the liberal press which conceives minorities as having problems and therefore need assistance, as well as the common conception of causing problems, as in the right-wing press.

runs against its own discourse and is more typical of coverage in *The Guardian*. It advocates the multi-faith, non-sectarian model of RE as the best, appealing to a consensus which draws on a discourse of moral necessity, rationality and a version of history based on the European Enlightenment. It rejects any form of separatism on the basis of economy, 'If Muslims were taught Islam by Muslim teachers.....it would not be long before taxpayers asked why this sectarian RE should be at the public expense' (10/10/97). Whilst competing against the main thrust of *The Times*' discourse, it constructs Muslims in the same way, exposing their 'ignorance and superstition....to the light of rational discussion'. This is particularly evident in the author's recognition of his own Utopian values in the face of religious particularism.

The Times also covers the Islamia school's continued lobbying for funding, also at the end of 1997, 'Muslim school may sue Labour' (3/12/97). However, the principal agenda of this article (and in its relation to others) is to problematise Labour and its numerous broken manifesto pledges.

The main examples of explicit counter discourse can be found in letters, both in *The Guardian* and *The Mail*. These are both written by Muslims (*The Guardian*'s is actually an advert in the form of a letter from a group of influential Muslims) and highlight the positive contribution of the Muslim community to British society. Both of these appear at the end of 1997, another year having passed whereby the situation appeared hopeful but funding did not materialise. *The Guardian*'s letter incorporates the discourse participants of readership and government to counter previous arguments against funding and persuade otherwise, for example; achievement in Muslim and other religious schools. A counter-strategy is used whereby the elements of discourse used by the objectionists are appropriated and their meaning 'trans-coded' (Hall, 1997b: 270). History is transformed to the opportunities of the present and the future rather than the past. The specificity of nationhood shifts to be incorporated into international significance. Britain is constructed as a plural and democratic society which is in need of 'moral regeneration' to which Muslim schools can contribute to. It appeals to a consensus of shared values, equality, respect and integration through a discourse of inclusivity and unity which the legitimisation of their status would create (and thus their participation in society). This has the specific function of putting those who oppose funding as equally rejecting those values expressed within the letter.

The Mail's letter appeals equally to morality, nation and equality in arguing for the positive contribution of Muslims in the UK, citing their equal status with regard to birthplace, combat in the World Wars, and contribution to the economy. Again, in the face of immorality, Muslims are seen to be instrumental in rebuilding the nation.

Although some positive coverage exists then, this tends to be drowned by the negative. This is particularly important if we consider the differentiation in the volume of news reaching audiences, given the readership of the right-wing press and particularly the tabloids. What this does illustrate is where the topic appears to be solely about British Muslims, there is more evidence of a struggle in the discourse (there is only one reference to any foreign element, that of the inability of foreign Imams working in mosque schools).¹⁶ However, due to the reliance on institutional discourse, both the educational and political prevalent here, even where reform is advocated (as in *The Guardian*), it may subliminally support the status quo (see Sources, p. 221).¹⁷

That the alienation of Muslims, in their lack of ability to participate fully in British society, may be increasing extremism is omitted from discussion. Nor does the debate about the separate teaching of religion encompass all the issues for Muslim parents who are also often concerned about the teaching of 'secular' subjects such as science from which children cannot be withdrawn. Specific initiatives by the Muslim community to gain publicity are ignored by the press such as the petition handed to Downing Street by children from Islamia school (BMMS, 5, 12, 1997).

In terms of transivity, Muslims are again seen to be either subject to the actions of the state or are the agents of negative action, this is common across papers. As previously mentioned, the high degree of nominalisations and passive constructions in headlines reinforces the idea that RE is in crisis and is illustrative of the competing discourses at play.

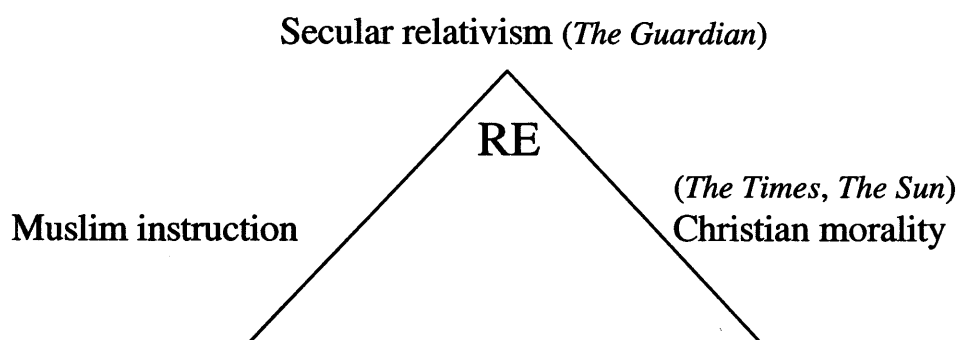
Coverage up to this point appeared to have followed a pattern over several years. Constantly predicting that Muslim schools are on the verge of receiving funding, yet this never occurs. Does this serve to keep Muslim interests in the public eye or as a scare tactic

¹⁶ The absence of foreign references (prevalent in the quantitative analysis) is due to the lack of coverage on Islamic fundamentalism in education in 1997. An analysis of this coverage may find less variation in its presentation between papers.

¹⁷ As with *The Guardian*'s use of 'non-Christian faiths' (see p. 167).

to ensure continued opposition or as a way of placating Muslims? (allowing *The Guardian* to reconcile its double role in supporting minorities and a secular system). This method of shelving problems deemed to be unimportant severely disadvantages minority groups (Lacey and Longman, 1997).

Despite the differing ideologies and discursive strategies of these papers, Muslims are constructed negatively. Although elements of positive discourse exist, particularly in *The Guardian*, this paper struggles with its attitude to religious dogmatism. The crisis in education which is seen to be caused by trying to accommodate minorities into our system is a reflection of the wider crisis in society; of identity and what it means to be British. On the basis of this coverage, it appears that the solution for the right wing papers is to defend a nostalgic view of Britain as white, Christian and homogenous. Although *The Guardian* is content with pluralism or multiculturalism as a way of accommodating minorities, it has a specific problem with Muslims due to their religious identification. Their dominant positions can be seen as constructed at the following opposing points:



Other articles on education in 1997 confirm these findings, that coverage reflects an ideology which finds the inclusion of Muslims within the British system a problem due to their different customs and beliefs. Articles focusing on Muslims' difficulties with sharing showers and sex education emphasise primarily the negative effects for the schools. Other major stories included an FE College fraud which involved Muslims (illegality) and coverage of the new Islamic College in Oxford.

The lack of willingness to accept Muslims as fellow citizens by British society is illustrated here. It shows that the acceptance that there is some need to accommodate Muslims' needs under the banner of multiculturalism had not (at the point of analysis) been fully implemented. In fact, it has been the reluctance of the education system to reconcile such needs which has led Muslims to seize autonomy and implement separate facilities for

their own children. This is examined in detail by the press as an example of their inability to fit in and adapt. A situation of 'mutual conflict' has therefore developed (Nielsen, 1991a). Although Muslims have made substantial advances in gaining influence at both a local and national level, particularly in the educational domain, this sort of press coverage illustrates their ongoing struggle (Nielsen, 1992). The increased publicity such issues receive is perhaps a reflection of a recognition of the Muslim community's increasing self-confidence and political organisation. As a reaction to this, the community is sometimes able to get its views represented in the press but at other times receives bad publicity in an attempt to negate or mobilise public opinion against them, resulting in a struggle in discourse. Apart from marginal expression of the Muslim perspective, the overall message is clear and has reflected educational policy in this area. Muslims are minorities, their concerns are marginal, and their place in the education system is as exceptions (Nielsen, 1991a).

Rushdie, Blasphemy and Religious Discrimination

In a similar vein to the coverage of education, the issues represented here symbolise minority relations in the UK and specifically the accommodation of Muslims. In particular, they are symptomatic of uncertainties in relation to secularism and cultural pluralism in post-modern society.

The Rushdie Affair (1989) could be described as the catalyst which brought to the surface tensions representing a crisis in contemporary cultural evolution.¹⁸ It has been argued that the Affair exposed the strong assimilationist thrust in liberal society with which Muslims, with their specific religious identifications, were deemed incompatible (and disloyal).¹⁹ Secularism could no longer, therefore, be hailed as the philosophy able to hold society together (Giddens, 1991). Debate regarding the operation of a multicultural society proved to be extremely narrow (in the press), with the right emphasising an inherent cultural clash and the left freedom of speech.²⁰ Much of the discourse worked to re-center the dominant hegemony of various elite groups.

¹⁸ For a critical discussion of The Rushdie Affair see Akhtar, 1989; Asad, 1989; Bhabha, 1989; Bhabha and Parekh, 1989; Cottle, 1991; Green, 1990; Herbert, 1993; Modood, 1990; O'Donnell, 1990; Parekh, 1989, 1990; Piscatori, 1990; Solomos, 1990.

¹⁹ For many Muslims, it was this event which led to the demonisation of Muslims in the UK. According to Dr Zaki Badawi 'The truth of the matter is that when Rushdie was incarcerated, so was the Muslim community' (quoted in *The Tablet*, 3/10/98).

²⁰ According to Silverman and Yuval-Davis (1998), The Rushdie Affair exposed Britain's 'multicultural' project as a compensatory model based on a conception of immigrants as a problem and was therefore a way of containing the potential threat. For proposed alternative systems of multiculturalism see Modood and

The continuing interest in Rushdie is symptomatic of the socio-cultural significance The Rushdie Affair had to the groups involved. Representing an ideological threat on all sides, coverage represents a struggle to retain hegemony. Having radicalised Muslim identity, in order to protect this, Muslims seek legal means to preserve their culture. As Muslims fight for their rights, by continual association with Rushdie, with its controversial nature and having become representative of conflict, dominant groups reproduce preferred discourses and ground new developments as old and un-resolvable conflicts (cultural clash). By emphasising conflict, minorities are represented as having separate and differing values and therefore represent a threat to dominant values. This breeds antipathy and social anxiety, thus preventing any changes to the preferred social system and hierarchy.

In 1997 articles on Rushdie included the annual renewal of the fatwa (religious decree) in all papers except *The Sun*, his increasingly public persona (*The Mail*), his third marriage (*The Mail*), the ban by Sri Lanka of the BBC film of his book, 'Midnight's Children' and a dialogue in *The Guardian* between Rushdie and writer John Le Carre on censorship which included a total of 13 letters.²¹ The revival of the debate with regard to the blasphemy laws, which harked back to The Rushdie Affair in this year, was based on proposals by the Government to introduce a religious discrimination law following lobbying by Muslim groups. Symptomatic of the increasing religiosity of Muslims, made visible and intensified by The Rushdie Affair, this issue also represents the centrality of the law to Muslims in achieving political legitimisation (being an expression of moral norms and outlooks, Runnymede Trust, 1997b), redressing socio-economic disadvantage and allowing full participation in public culture (Herbert, 1993). In not accepting the confinement of religion to the private sphere, Muslims seek to strengthen their own cultural survival.

Muslims argue that the religious dimension of discrimination is in ascendancy due to the changing perceptions in British society influenced by contemporary political processes. However, under current legislation such as the Race Relations Act 1976, the Public Order Act 1986 and the blasphemy law, Muslims are not protected. The effect of the Race Relations Act has been to make race the crucial category in gauging the treatment of and provision for minorities in the UK. Because Muslims do not constitute a race and Islam is a

Werbner's 'The Politics of Multiculturalism' (1997) and Shohat and Stam's (1994) radical polycentric multiculturalism.

²¹ Continued attention, then, focuses on ongoing restrictions, the effect of the fatwa on Rushdie's life and censorship issues.

religion of many nationalities and races, they are not protected under this law, although it extends its cover to Jews and Sikhs as they are considered to be ethnic groups.²² Although it may be possible for Muslims to claim indirect discrimination if the complainant is a member of a racial group in which 'Islam' is the dominant faith, this does not protect Muslims of a European background. This is unacceptable to many Muslims, in principle, due to their identification with their religion and desire to protect it. Religious groups cannot protect their religion from defamation under blasphemy laws as these only protect the Anglican tradition within Christianity. This was not, however, part of the Muslim agenda for reform.

Reform for Muslims, based on laws on religious discrimination, represents 'a very different social and political project' to blasphemy; 'the institutionalisation of social rights' and should therefore be discussed in very different terms (Unsworth, 1995). Yet, the mainstream press in Britain have transformed this issue, which is Muslim driven, to a discussion of Muslim demands for their inclusion within the blasphemy laws, allowing the details and discourse contained in the Rushdie debate to re-emerge. One consequence of the grounding within this framework is that religious discrimination is perceived as solely a Muslim issue.

This is a key difference in the structure and content in the definition of the event by *The Guardian* and the right-wing press. The focus in the first article in *The Guardian* is religious discrimination, apparent in the headline, 'Ban on religious discrimination' (12/6). However in both *The Mail* and *The Times* this information is downgraded to the level of side comment in *The Mail* and is absent in *The Times* (30/7/97). The blasphemy laws are reconstructed to top-level information (appearing in both headlines).²³ This deliberate misinterpretation of events reveals the ideological stance of the papers. Once the issue has been defined in this way, it continues to be constructed as such in *The Times*. This features just one other negative commentary representing closure around the negation of reform (2/8). Following its initial formulation, this definition also takes precedence in *The Guardian* which features a further 6 articles criticising the law, until October, when Jack Straw rejects any foreseeable modifications. At this point of safety, both *The Guardian* and

²² The provision of services on the basis of racial categorisation has also disadvantaged and marginalised Muslims (Nielsen, 1990; UKACIA, 1993).

²³ The lexical item 'blasphemy' appears in all papers in a total of 4 headlines compared to 'religious discrimination' which appears once in *The Guardian*.

The Mail revert back to a discussion of religious discrimination (23/10).²⁴ Whilst *The Mail* closes on its approval of government non-action, *The Guardian* features one other letter reinforcing its stance. In addition to this, a further (and first) article in *The Guardian* on the subject, a letter, occurs before the proposed action by Straw. This is clearly representative of *The Guardian*'s ideology regarding religion as a private matter, setting the tone for further coverage, 'Faith is a state of mind' (6/1). The volume of information and the speed with which this issue is introduced in *The Guardian* compared to the other papers illustrates its commitment to the great liberalist tradition which advocates the freedom to publish and sees Muslim demands encroaching upon it.

All papers therefore reject any reforms to make the blasphemy law more inclusive and support the total abolition of the law. The discourses of modernity, rationality, nation, history, identity, freedom, primitivism, absolutism, particularism, homogeneity and economy are prevalent in their arguments. Despite having differing motives, the papers appear to adopt a secular liberal approach to establish their argument. Here, I shall firstly examine the similarities in the papers' approaches followed by their specificities.

By reducing the debate about religious discrimination to that of blasphemy, the issue becomes one of freedom of speech and censorship. Having little to do with the original event, and being a value which the press has particular interests in protecting, this allows the papers to construct a discourse which orchestrates public opinion to reject the primary initiative. In rejecting the 'blasphemy' law, the papers resort to a particular discourse in their argumentation strategy.

The Mail argues, in its first news report, 'we have to protect the ability in a democratic society to voice dissent'. *The Guardian*'s view is that the abolition of the law is 'the only course compatible with freedom of belief in a modern society', any alternative course of action is considered a 'historical anomaly'(14/8). This position is reiterated 10 times in this single editorial and again in 2 editorials and 3 letters. *The Times*' ideology is editorialised as 'Ever since Milton's fiercely anti-censorship arguments in the *Areopagitica*, the right to publish what you want has been hard fought. This is scarcely the time to turn back' (Bar, 2/8). Thus, all papers construct the nation as built on a particular view of history based on democracy and secular Enlightenment values. Britain is constructed as a liberal

²⁴ Although *The Mail* refers to this as the 'religious hate' law. The inverted commas represent *The Mail*'s non-acceptance of such a phenomenon.

secular nation in a 'Modern plural society, having an established religion is itself an anomaly' (Gray, *The Guardian*, 12/8).²⁵ Unusually, *The Times* also takes this line, 'The British in general ignore religion. They are as unchurchy a nation as you could find' (Bar, 2/8). Thus, the law is seen as 'a dated concept' (*The Mail*, 30/7), 'a dead cinder' and 'moribund' (Bar, 2/8). It is, therefore, 'Time to get rid of the crime of blasphemy' (Gray, *The Guardian*, 12/8). By relating their own views to a discourse of democracy, history and modernity, the press constructs Muslim demands in opposition, as restrictive, archaic, primitive. The composition of the discourse constructs secularism as the only path to modernity. Free speech is presented as an absolute which exists unproblematically alongside the discourse of Muslim absolutism. Yet the inherent universalism the press applies to its values increases their worth and adds to views of Islamic particularism and irrationality. In addition, by appealing to such a strong consensual value in the operation of democracy, they are less likely to be opposed.

Both *The Times* and *The Guardian* construct the superiority of the nation within a comparative framework whereby the relationship between religion and state in other countries is denigrated, 'we have avoided the ugly return into political life of the repressed religious which is common in regimes that make the separation of church and state an article of faith' (Gray, *The Guardian*, 12/8). The secular state has thus managed to control its religions by allowing them to practice. However, this is marginalised to the private sphere by the rejection of legal intervention in this instance, 'To tackle religious tensions we need courtesy and firm compromise, not more legislation', 'The law should not rush in' (Bar, 2/8). This statement is typical of right-wing argumentative rejection of affirmative action. It suggests that discrimination is a matter of integrity and morality which is hypocritical given its usual position on law and order (van Dijk, 1991).

Particularly important in the press' strategy for building a consensus around the rejection of the law is attending to its unworkability. The selection of negative aspects of the debate is apparent in this scare tactic which suggests that the law will have 'all sort of sects claiming protection' *The Times*, *The Mail*, 30/7; *The Guardian*, 12/6. *The Mail* in particular uses disclaimers such as 'However' following any positive balancing statements

²⁵ These two significant editorials were written by academics (referred to subsequently by their name), 'The law should let sleeping dogmas lie' by Paul Bar, Senior Fellow Institute of Community Studies' (*The Times*), and in *The Guardian* 'Time to get rid of the crime of blasphemy' by John Gray, Professor of Politics at Oxford University. This adds authority and credibility to the papers stance.

to negate them. Given the problems in the definition and implementation of all laws, this can be seen as an unwillingness to discuss the full scope of the law.

Both *The Mail* and *The Guardian* implicitly deny the need for any new law, *The Mail* refers to 'what it calls Islamophobia' and that 'many Moslems say they suffer prejudice', 30/7. *The Guardian*, in an article entitled 'Muslim Tykes Happy Here' quotes a Muslim stating 'we are beyond that stage now'... 'It was a big problem in the 1960s and 1970s but it is not a priority now' (24/10).

By constructing the issue in such a way, the focus (and responsibility) is shifted from white structural discrimination to the Muslim community and their personal beliefs, 'one price of living in this (pluralist society) is that everyone has to put up with statements that offend them, without resorting to violence or the law' (2/8). *The Times* construction here of Britain as pluralist is exposed as purely strategic in the face of its ethnocentric discourse, questioning whether you should change the law to suit the minority when the majority is indifferent. By associating Muslim (legitimate) action to violence here (and forefronting it), despite the fact there were no acts of violence in this instance and few in The Rushdie Affair (is this a subtle reference to the reaction by Muslims to 'The Satanic Verses'?), Muslims are associated foremost with illegitimate negative activity. Muslim beliefs then become the focus of blame. They are constructed as a package of rules which restrict 'our' freedom, 'Rules that would have put Rushdie in the dock' (*The Mail*, 30/7/97). This constitutes a reversal strategy which attributes censorship to the victimised group whilst the papers present a united front advocating freedom to discriminate. Muslims are therefore to blame for this 'so-called Islamophobia' (Walter, *The Guardian*, 24/10). Muslims are again constructed as a homogenous collectivity and as such constitute a threat to liberal individualism.

The Guardian allows additional space to reproduce this discourse in 4 letters and 2 editorials. It unequivocally rejects the interference of state in religion but wishes to situate this within a tolerant, pluralistic stance, 'The truly inclusive move would involve the gradual withdrawal of the state from all matters of faith. These should be left as individual and community activities whilst the state concentrates on educating citizens to cherish and display the tolerance which allows pluralism to flourish' (Lane, 6/1). This view- as we have seen- is editorialised (Gray, 12/8) and followed by two supportive letters where the 'Blasphemy law is roundly cursed'. In one of these, Mullins argues that Gray deserves the

support of 'all-fair minded citizens', constructing an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy whereby Muslim belief appears irrational in the face of these rational outpourings. The global coherence of these arguments is consolidated in *The Guardian's* final article, a letter from a representative of the Rationalist Press Association. This reiterates *The Guardian's* macropropositions (in an exaggerated form). It employs a reversal strategy, focusing on the 'fundamentalist' groups which would be subject to the laws they demand and cites The Rushdie Affair as an example of extreme behaviour. Muslims' sectarianism is interpreted as divisive and would increase their marginalisation. The law is deemed ineffective, providing the example of Northern Ireland. The presence of Islamophobia is questioned and secularism advocated as the solution.

The Guardian's religious intolerance is made most explicit in an article on 3rd August (Carol Sarler). This too employs a reversal strategy whereby the non-religious are the persecuted. Parodying religious discourse it is entitled 'Come and offend us, all ye faithful' and claims '*Our* basic decency is clearing a path for the vociferous few to impose on others their views' (making claims to tolerance and enforced beliefs). A lengthy and highly rhetorical piece, full of evaluative adverbs and generic statements, it provides an explicit interpretation from an atheist's perspective.²⁶ Blasphemy laws are 'outmoded', believers are 'afflicted with faith' like an illness, 'religion is a dark and dangerous force', has led to a 'political correctness' and 'mollycoddling that goes far beyond desirable tolerance', and is likened to 'voodoo'. The religious have a 'vehement zeal', 'bigotry and ignorance'.

The Guardian's position vis-à-vis religion is an example of how this, alongside non-Western cultures, are seen as 'relics of primitivism' in opposition to the intellectually advanced secular world. It follows the assumption as Michael Dummett, philosopher, observed amongst intellectuals that the 'religious believer may properly be affronted, indeed deserve to be affronted' (cited in Modood, 1993a). According to Modood (1993b), this itself is a form of cultural racism as religion is currently of greater personal value and community importance to non-white than to white people in Britain.

Counter discourse in The Guardian

Counter discourse in *The Guardian* exists in the tension between its *secular* pluralism and difficulty with religion. Its anti-discriminatory stance gives space to alternative

²⁶ It should be noted that the further away from 'news' we get, the more editorial controls loosen, allowing populist views to be expressed, apparent in both the fore-mentioned letter and this editorial.

interpretations pertaining to a discourse of equality and rights. Initially this topic is constructed on this basis as 'human rights legislation', therefore Muslims are seen to be 'pressing for change' rather than 'demanding', the lexical choice of the right-wing press (12/6). The linguistic register of this article, which lapses into a racial framework, allows *The Guardian's* tensions to be resolved.²⁷ However, the race-relations framework constructs Muslims as passive victims, 'disadvantaged' and needing 'assistance', 'protection', therefore subject to governmental action. Evidence of this discourse occurs again following the preclusion of reform by Jack Straw. Entitled 'Religious Debate' and covering two articles, one concentrating on religious discrimination, 'Straw shelves law on Islamophobia', and the Muslim response, 'Muslim Tykes Happy Here' (23/10). The tension in the discourses are ever apparent here. *The Guardian* attends to the Islamophobia document and its contents and the positive contribution of Muslims to society, 'It is good to know the Muslim contribution is welcome. Bradford is our city and we want to help it' says Mohammed Akram'.²⁸ Whereas this, however, seems to imply that Muslims have been let down, the other article appears to contradict this by asserting Muslim confidence and identity and questioning the need for a law (see p.183 for additional comments on this article). What could have been a positive example of coverage is undermined by its composition and by associating this re-assertion of identity to a more vociferous youth, 'we don't get trouble, cos they know we'll duff them up if they try'. What appears then in composition to satisfy the title 'Religious Debate' is just an illusion. However, the article does provide the only allusion to the heterogeneity of Muslims, in the form of a pie chart, which shows how Muslims are divided among nationalities.

The Guardian's willingness to give space to the Muslim perspective is illustrated by a letter from Ibrahim Hewitt, Development Officer for the Association of Muslim Schools (14/8). It presents an alternative viewpoint, for example, on freedom of speech. Hewitt

²⁷ Coverage of discrimination towards Muslims is low as it is perceived in racial terms. Many Muslims are therefore not recognised in this area so their disadvantage is overlooked. Other coverage results in an overall idea of Muslims as aggressors. Structurally, Muslims cannot complain about discrimination on religious grounds, the lack of evidence for discrimination is then used as an excuse for not implementing legislation (Unsworth, 1995; Whitmore for CRE, 1997).

²⁸ The space *The Guardian* gives to 'Islamophobia' is evidence that this has provided Muslims with the 'political language, images and cultural symbols' to make political progress in the face of a discredited anti-racist movement and the limitations of racial classification (Gilroy, 1988: 50). However, Gilroy argues that the dangers of this is that it results in a convergence of culturally opposed groups' view of race purely in terms of culture and identity which has resulted in the cultural clash conception prevalent here, resulting in 'the circularity of power'.

draws attention to the problematic nature of the free speech argument the press espouses, pointing to anomalies such as the current libel protection laws. He tries to draw the line between freedom of expression and offence, advocating the need for protection from 'scurrilous abuse, like that at the height of The Rushdie Affair'.

A counter to the view of religion presented in *The Guardian* also comes in the form of a letter, from a Christian teacher, entitled 'Live and let live'. It is critical of Carol Sarler's 'blanket demonisation' of the religious (3/8). However, it opposes the blasphemy laws and whilst criticising her for her extremism, placing him in the same category 'alongside Islamic terrorist and American right-wing evangelicals', reinforces stereotypes of Muslims in the same sentence. Islam's association with extremism, as well as the overall negativity towards religion, undermines the positive coverage. It should be said that whilst *The Guardian* is not explicitly negative towards Muslims, the unequivocal judgement of religion trivialises Muslims in their strong religious identification. It is in their constructed opposition to *Guardian* values that Muslims are formulated negatively. With further references to Muslims as 'hard-line' and 'fundamentalists' when discussing issues of concern to Muslims (see Nick Cohen's article on 'Dead laws', *The Observer*, 2/11) that Muslims are ideologically fixed. *The Guardian's* letters reveal the shared social scripts by which Muslims have come to be known; women and their clothing (12/6), The Rushdie Affair, Muslim schools (12/8), fundamentalism (24/10). This extremist image of Islam further encourages the idea that Muslims desire a restriction on free speech rather than the conception of a law which protects individuals against expressions of hatred such as racial defamation (Ingnatieff, 1989, 1990).

The Times offers a distinct view of the nation as exclusive and a different solution to the accommodation of minorities. Its position vis-à-vis the blasphemy laws becomes evident through its modal expression which is less definite than *The Guardian*. Whilst *The Guardian* proclaimed 'Ban on religious discrimination', *The Times* illustrates its lack of support for the law by 'Blasphemy laws *could* be extended to other faiths' (90/7). In this headline, the presupposed knowledge that Christianity is the central faith reveals *The Times* position with regards to this.

Its editorial, (2/8), is formulated in an intensive rhetorical mode which uses alliteration and metaphor to carry its message. The law is 'a rottweiler of reform', alluding to the trouble it may cause. Although referring tactically to a plural society, the discourse of

The Times reveals an exclusionist nationalist ideology. *The Times*' construction of Muslims is therefore explicitly negative. It quotes a member of 'the *so-called* (insinuating its illegitimacy) Muslim Parliament', an extreme choice of representative for British Muslims saying 'He hoped it would lead (the law) to Mr. Rushdie standing trial for incitement.' This acts as an example of what may follow if we agree to this type of legislation and indicates that Britain is being too accommodating. Bar advocates assimilation, using the example of the '19th century Jewish immigrant' as a good role model of how minorities should behave in attempting to be more British than the British thus avoiding 'dual loyalty' (2/8). The reference to Britons as 'natives' further reinforces a conception of Muslims as outsiders. He is directly negative towards Islam, regarding it as uncompromising, 'Some creeds, and Islam is one, find it hard to adjust to being just one set of beliefs amongst many'. By using an Asian academic to support these views, Professor Bikhu Parekh from the Policy Studies Institute, he avoids any charges of racism. Parekh is quoted as saying that the wider community in Britain 'is rightly entitled to expect that its *immigrants* (emphasis added) who have chosen to come and settle in its midst, would make every effort to become part of it, and in that sense identify with it'. *The Times* attacks powerful white groups as an argumentative move further avoiding the racist label. It criticises both the Government and CRE for initiating the plans and discredits their integrity by insinuating political motives in supporting minorities, 'If you're wondering why the subject has re-emerged now, it is worth remembering that the Home Secretary is the MP for Blackburn, where the Muslim vote is very important' and the CRE 'was shrewd to eye new territory'.

The Mail

The Mail has a similar ideology to *The Times* on this subject but uses different discursive strategies to achieve its goal. Assigning a whole page and two articles to the initial development, its clear modal expression does not need editorialising.²⁹ Its leader 'Moslems can look forward to the same protection as Christians' also situates Christianity centrally and constitutes a 'tease' given the position in *The Mail* that giving Muslims parity with Christians is not acceptable (Cottle, 1991).

The Mail places this new event in a well-known situational model which presupposes relevant episodic knowledge to interpret it (van Dijk, 1983, 1988). The

²⁹ It is evident that the requirement by the broadsheets to 'appear' to be objective means that more explicit ideology is formulated through commentary.

familiarity leads to a generalisation (the same as The Rushdie Affair) and works to prefer familiar solutions. The headline 'Defender of all faiths' refers to Prince Charles' previous statement that he would prefer to be defender of all faiths as king. Readers of the paper will remember how this was previously framed, negatively, but they are also provided with selective reminders: it 'would chime with the beliefs of the Prince of Wales who would prefer to be defender of faith than Defender of the Faith, Christianity'. However, here, this refers to Jack Straw. This immediately places Straw in a similar position of ridicule.

Although most of the broadsheet headlines involve non transactive clauses, passive constructs and nominalisations emphasising processes, the contrast is distilled in *The Mail's* articles where the agency is clear.³⁰ The emphasis on the participant's responsibility in the sub headline: 'Straw plans to rewrite law on blasphemy' has political motives, associating New Labour with negative, accommodating 'loony left' policy. A quote from one Muslim leader saying it is good news, 'the kind of gesture we hoped from the Labour government' works to further discredit both the government and the law. This article then, which focuses on the blasphemy laws, is framed by negative responses and criticism. We have seen some of the strategies utilised already. In *The Mail's* tradition, the cost of the law is included (nowhere else does this occur). The article closes with quotes from anti censorship groups that 'back Mr. Rushdie' including Carmel Bedford stating 'This is terrifying'. This is juxtaposed with Muslims 'demanding' change, which invokes a more sinister effect than seen elsewhere.

Inset to this article is a report specifically relating to Rushdie. It consists of a large head and shoulders shot, which now has currency as a visual symbol of conflict and incompatibility. The article goes on to express The Rushdie Affair on a selective basis, providing ideological coherence with previous interpretations. It provides the history of the death sentence and says 'Moslem countries banned the book and British Moslems demonstrated against it', homogenising and therefore associating all British Muslims with the death sentence.³¹ *The Mail* does, however, present the right wing view of Rushdie, unlike the other papers, that he has 'attempted to enrage Moslems by writing a purposely blasphemous book,' indicative of its sympathy with religious and censorship positions.

³⁰ However, the actions that are included are negative and represent both the restrictions minorities place on the majority and the action minorities are subject to, 'Ban, Shelves, get rid of, cursed'.

³¹ Stories about Rushdie tend to have a highly international context raising fears about Islam's international power and possible disloyalty. Although this is referred to in 4 of these articles, it is less prevalent due to the specific British focus of the issue analysed here.

This decontextualising of the events in The Rushdie Affair is a common practice in all papers and presents Muslims as irrational, acting for no apparent reason. By keeping the parameters of debate around the blasphemy laws and marginalising Muslim commentary, alternative, viable options to protect Muslims from discrimination are excluded from discussion, such as successful implementation abroad.³² Other omissions include a full debate about the problematic nature of the free speech argument, for example the non-incorporation of Muslims current inability to freely practice their religion which contravenes European and UN laws.³³ These 'omissions' mean that the press is not practising its own ideology, allowing free speech. The immorality of this (and the failure to protect minority groups) is not considered amidst the wider moral discourse.

These argumentative strategies work then to fix public opinion around rejecting the law, 'The answer is to repeal all blasphemy laws' (*The Mail*, 30/7), we should 'abolish the offence of bias altogether' to bring equality. When the current hegemony is strengthened through non-action, *The Times* remains silent whilst *The Mail's* short article, 'Straw says No to 'religious hate' law' (23/10), supports the Home Secretary's decision and forecloses any discussion around this outcome.³⁴ This would appear to contradict the paper's previous secular appeals for abolition and suggests that the rhetoric employed by the papers was actually engaged to maintain Christianity's privileged position, (it was rejected by the Government for its unworkability, a strong element of press discourse). *The Guardian's* subsequential coverage shows some sympathy to Muslims in their 'disappointment' due to its position on the blasphemy law, (23/10). However, I have already shown how the composition of this article reveals its ideological stance to the extension of or additional laws (constituting an unreasonable interference with freedom of expression). Its overarching title 'Pronouncing a fatwa on extremes' indicates some satisfaction that the Government has not pandered to fanaticism. Both these articles occur following the launch of the report on Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust. The announcement that legislation on religious discrimination would not be implemented 'in this Parliament' was just one out of numerous

³² For suggested alternative policy see Poulter, UKACIA, 1993; Runnymede Trust, 1997b.

³³ Including Article 9, the European Convention of Human Rights, on the basis that Muslims ability to practice their religion freely in Britain is curtailed in many areas of social and economic activity; the UN declaration on the elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, 1991; the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 18 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18 (UKACIA, 1993).

³⁴ Coverage of this issue represents, therefore, another example of press 'shelving' of issues without proper discussion and resolution (Lacey and Longman, 1997).

issues discussed. Yet the law's precedence in the order of relevance represents an ideologically based transformation, again shifting the discussion away from discrimination towards Muslims to Muslim censorship.

The power struggle in society over the negotiation of national collectivity, which this issue symbolises, is barely represented in the press. The competing discourses present in the press consist almost entirely of the two hegemonic socio-political forces in society, secular liberalism and liberal Christianity. These, despite their differences, converge to exclude Muslims from public life (by not awarding them legitimate and thus equal status). Although this Muslim-driven issue now has a place in the public arena, it has not been presented as Muslims would wish and has failed to have any effect on the law.

These competing discourses represent the arguments regarding the relationship between Church and State.³⁵ Currently, as the Established religion, Christianity is a symbol of national identity which attributes other religions with second class status. Whilst this situation remains, there are structural difficulties in treating all equally. Despite their protestations, the right-wing press appears to support this exclusion from Britishness whilst *The Guardian* appears to want to exclude public religiosity per se. By squeezing religion out of the public culture, exponents of liberal secularism practice an exclusionism whereby minority religions would be the most disadvantaged given the relative power and influence of Christianity in British public life. Thus, the debate regarding Muslims in *The Guardian* reveals the illiberalism in its own liberal rhetoric. Secular liberalism which claims to be non-privileging and therefore a solution to all is equally shown to privilege non-belief. In seeking to preserve its own identity (secular), liberalism cannot therefore satisfy the principle of equality (Parekh, 1997). Yet this is at odds with its philosophy on rights provided by the same Enlightenment movement which suppressed religious belief (Linden, 1995). It is this tension in liberal theory which places Muslims of all minority groups outside *The Guardian's* pluralist vision of society (see Mendus, 1989 on the limits of liberalism).

For these reasons neither secular liberalism nor Christian traditionalism can accommodate Islam with its assertive religiosity (and the clash of values and loyalties it brings) within its conception of Britishness. This would require a re-evaluation of the

³⁵ For a full discussion on the Establishment debate and the 'politics of recognition' see Modood, 1993a, 1997 and Modood and Werbner, 1997.

nation. Through press coverage of British Muslims the current crisis in national identity and attempts to re-center dominant political forces are exposed.

Islamic Fundamentalism in the UK

The term 'fundamentalism' has its origins in American Protestantism within movements opposed to modernising tendencies who insisted on a literal interpretation of the bible.³⁶ The association of the term with the maintenance of orthodox religious beliefs and its opposition to the forces of liberalism and secularism immediately formulates a fundamentalist-modernist dichotomy which has been used by Western journalists to discredit resurgent Islamic movements. However, due to its Christian presuppositions, many theorists argue that the term is misplaced (Esposito, 1992; Sayyid, 1997). According to The Runnymede Trust (1997), the first application of the term to Islam was in 1957 in the *Middle East Journal*. However, it only became a routine part of journalese following an influential article by Anthony Burgess in *The Observer*, 27/9/81, which stated 'the phenomenon of the new, or rather very old, Islam, the dangerous fundamentalism revived by the ayatollahs and their admirer as a device, indistinguishable from a weapon, for running a modern state' (Runnymede Trust, 1997b: 7). Since then the term has been inextricably linked to terrorism and extremism so that these terms have become virtually interchangeable when applied to Islamic fundamentalists.³⁷ The connotations have become so well-known that the term is frequently used as a metaphor in articles which are entirely unconnected to Islam to summon up ideas of mad extremism.

Fundamentalism in the press is inappropriately applied to a variety of political groups and governments with differing goals and beliefs that go by the name of Islam. The result being that they are homogenised under the same label which allows them to be constructed discursively in almost identical ways. Islamic fundamentalism in Britain applies virtually exclusively to foreign dissidents living in Britain whilst being involved in activities to support political struggle elsewhere.³⁸ Coverage in 1997 included the debts of Saudi

³⁶ Thought to be a product of the early part of the 20th century although this is debatable (Caplan, 1987; Kepel, 1994; The Runnymede Trust, 1997b).

³⁷ It should be noted that this interpretation of fundamentalism is Western and does not take account of the various interpretations in the Islamic world (see Modood, 1990). It also rarely applied to other forms of religious fundamentalism, Jewish or Christian.

³⁸ Although Modood (1990) argues that Britain's Asian community was constructed as such during The Rushdie Affair. I would agree that by presenting Muslims as extreme, connections to fundamentalism can

dissident, Mohammed al-Masari (January, *The Guardian* and *Times*; September, *The Mail*); the letter-bombing of the Saudi newspaper al-Hayat in London (January, all papers except *The Mail*); accusations by foreign governments towards Britain for harbouring dissidents including Israel (August, *The Mail*) and in particular Egypt following the massacre of 60 tourists in Luxor by the Islamic extremist group, al-Gamaa al Islamiya (November, all papers). These stories are often triggered by international incidents and gives the press an opportunity to pressurise the Government to act upon what is constructed as a terrorist threat within. This is a common pattern which recurs frequently in press coverage of fundamentalism in Britain. There is little difference in the development of the stories in papers except in terms of space allocated whereby *The Guardian* accounts for the most (double that of even *The Times*) and *The Mail* the least. *The Sun* has just 1 article relating to these events but does not refer to Muslims or Islam within it (see p. 187/8).

The ideological coherence between papers, and with the state, is based on the extremism of the events whereby terrorism is considered morally abhorrent on a non-partisan basis. Terrorism, as interpreted by the British power structures, can be defined as 'an illegitimate form of violence which is a dangerous threat to liberal democracy' (Miller, 1994: 4). A much written about subject, it is considered to have a rhetorical ideological function whereby only enemies are labelled and friendly government's terrorist actions are ignored.³⁹ The term has thus been appropriated by those who have the power to define a terrorist act, as an act of violence that is disapproved of. Most journalists would see themselves in alliance with the state in fighting terrorism (as with crime) and therefore texts work in unison to prevent any recognition or sympathy for the agents of terrorism (Miller, 1994).

This topic is rarely editorialised, the rational interpretation of events as illegitimate, based on a consensual definition of violence, renders texts ideologically sealed. This foreign and violent element allows a reductive, simplistic portrayal of the issues in black and white: terrorism is bad and needs to be dealt with. Thus, coverage fits more neatly into the foreign coverage news frame proposed by Dahlgren and Chakrapani (1982) with its motifs of disorder, flawed development and primitivism in contrast to the order and stability of the West.

be implied and the global coherence of coverage may have this effect but generally and explicitly the application of this term is limited to foreigners.

³⁹ See Gearty, 1991; Thackrah, 1987; Wilkinson, 1978, 1990; and Wright, 1991.

This issue is therefore constructed through the discourse of national interests. An issue which arises from both international politics and internal policy (towards immigration and national security), it allows the nation to be constructed as superior and is used to justify British activity on an international scale which is aimed at securing the Western hegemony. Out of the strategies used to discredit the Islamic fundamentalists emerges an Orientalist homogenising discourse of irrationality, primitivism, deviance, disloyalty and violent extremism.

Because of the parity in coverage between papers, it seems preferable, in this section, to examine the significant macrosemantic conceptualisations occurring, together. The macrosemantic assertion being that the infiltration of Muslim fundamentalists is a threat to British interests which requires government action. Through this, Muslims are constructed as fanatical yet ideologically weak, homogenous yet sectarian. Their actions are decontextualised, categorised and naturalised. The strength of the framework that has been established on this issue means that, in general, each article that occurs includes all these characteristics. These will now be examined in turn along with the strategies supporting this argumentation.

The fundamentalist threat

The fundamentalist threat is illustrated most explicitly by the coverage of the letter-bomb sent to the Saudi newspaper al-Hayat, where actual physical violence occurs. In all these articles, the injuries to the staff are exaggerated and forefronted, 'Two wounded as letter bombers aim for London target' (*The Times*, 14/1), 'Two injured by letter bomb at Arab newspaper' (*Guardian*, 14/1), 'Guard hurt in bombing' (*Sun*, 14/1). *The Sun* and *The Times* resort to dramatic hyperbole, using distinct lexical items associated with physical suffering. *The Times* incorporates a photograph of a woman wiping her eyes whilst talking to the police, expressing vulnerability.⁴⁰ An article adjacent to this is called simply 'The Toll' and details the history of Britain being subject to violence due to Middle Eastern politics. As will become more evident, Britain is portrayed as an innocent victim who attempts to mediate between irrational nations and suffers as a consequence.

The Guardian features a small map locating the newspaper's offices in London, inferring the possible effects on the local community and its inhabitants, and locating the

⁴⁰ Corresponding with other coverage of British Muslim women, she wears a simple headscarf which allows readers to sympathise rather than alienate as a full hijab might do.

threat in central London with the potential disruption. Both *The Times* and *The Guardian* credit Islamists with the attack as 'the work of Islamic extremists' although this had not yet been established. This is not apparent in *The Sun*'s article which does not identify the agents of the bombing. Its article is scarce in detail and measures just 5 by 3 cm at the bottom of page 4.

However, these physical attacks are scarce, the threat being implicit in the global coherence of foreign coverage of violent terrorism and the alien taking refuge in our midst. The Islamist movements are seen as spreading and infiltrating countries, which is reinforced by making reference to other countries with the same 'problem'. After the letter bombing, *The Times* leader purports 'Islamic extremists blamed after terror campaign spreads from America to Britain' (14/1). This international network is made particularly explicit in coverage following the Luxor incident. It is in the context of death where the Islamists are explicitly labelled terrorists. The articles, following the Egyptian president's accusations that Britain is harbouring terrorists, are virtually identical, with the same sources, actors and details, although the lexical items employed in *The Mail* are more explicit (24/11). Although, to some extent, this is due to the reactive nature of the news when little other information is available: *The Mail*: 'Egypt blames Britain over Luxor killings'; *The Times*: 'Britain protecting Egyptian militants'; and *The Guardian*: 'Britain accused of harbouring terrorists'.⁴¹ The first subject position of Egypt in *The Mail*, making agency clear, and the discursive attention to the 'killers' illustrates its tendency to categorically attribute blame. It also includes a picture, inset, of a British child who died, with the caption 'Victim: Shaunnah Turner was killed with her mother and grandmother'. This angle is also taken, after similar accusations by Israel to Britain in August, over a charity 'that funds killers' (*The Mail*, 12/8) and is reinforced with a letter that refers to the 'extremists that....killed and maimed' (4/12). This development being the result of suicide bombings in Israel that killed 13 people. Its modal expression is emphatic, 'terror suspects living freely in Britain' (12/8), Britain has an 'unenviable and growing status as a safe haven for Middle Eastern and other terrorists' (24/11). The construction of the alien within allows for the perpetuation of the myth that the (non-Western) foreign immigrant pollutes British society with disorder without which the tradition of stability and non-violence would be maintained

⁴¹ By focusing on the accusations, Britain is constructed as an innocent bystander subject to foreign government's criticisms.

(Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982). The attack on tourists has an extreme news value whereby the British victims are seen to be innocent bystanders of foreign conflicts and represent the common person. Again 'we' are caught up in 'their' troubles.

The form in which these articles appear, whereby foreign governments accuse Britain of harbouring terrorists, poses an ideological dilemma for the papers in terms of national interests. Attacks on the country's integrity are to be defended, however, the presence of terrorists within its borders also poses a threat to national security. The papers, clearly, do not want to show accordance with the countries but share their basic argument, that Britain should not be protecting terrorists. As a result, the papers are cautious in their acceptance of any charges made against the UK, whilst at the same time condemning the activities and presence of the extremists. This hypocrisy is illustrated by the use of authoritative Saudi sources to denounce the dissidents whilst at the same time attacking Saudi's justice system. This ideological struggle is demonstrated in *The Mail* in a two page spread on Saudi justice following the sentencing of British nurse Lucille McLauchlan for the murder of a colleague, 25/9. This includes articles condemning the Saudi justice system, featuring British people who have suffered at the hands of this, 'British man flogged for crime he did not commit', conforming to its approach on 'national interest'. Yet it shows sympathies for 'the eye for an eye' philosophy (tough on law and order) although, again, only when it serves British interests. This is evident in an adjacent article about a British woman who demanded life for life for her husband's killers in Saudi and is represented in a positive light. This confusion is also apparent, in the same double spread, when it refers to the Saudi dissident, Mohammed al-Masari, arguing 'the nation should not give comfort to those who seek to undermine the Saudi government' but then quotes him as saying that 'It has exposed the Saudi regime for what it is' (the trial of Ms. McLauchlan). This conflict of interests also manifests in *The Guardian* following the Egyptian president's accusations. In a defensive mode, the paper acknowledges his view but trivialises his argument as what amounts to shifting the blame, 'The Home Office, while reluctant to get involved in a tit-for-tat argument with President Mubarak, countered that the British government was taking a series of measures aimed at clamping down on international terrorism' and again further on in the article, 'In a direct challenge to President Mubarak, the Home Office pointed out that there was existing extradition treaties and if countries believed Britain was harbouring terrorists, it was up to those countries to...' (24/11) (also 28/11). Whilst incredulous

towards Mubarak's claims, evident in the use of understatement and disclaimers, applying 'alleged', 'claims', 'reportedly' to Mubarak's comments, the papers also provide evidence of the presence of some dissidents in the UK. The preponderance of speech acts in the headlines and text of these reports reflects both the reliance on verbal processes in the operation of politics but also the negotiation of the papers between the differing positions (Fowler, 1991). It is recognised that the situation is constantly changing, the use of speech acts avoids commitment to facts and allows papers to engage in belief suspension as well as political mitigation. The emphasis on Government action detracts from the possibility of terrorists in London. *The Mail* is the most definite about the threat, directly linking the extremists living in Britain to the Luxor killings, mitigating less for the Government. *The Guardian* begins with a more definite approach but increasingly becomes sceptical about the accusations, playing down Britain's role in abetting terrorist activities.⁴² *The Times* occupies the middle ground, recognising the threat but conceding to the difficulties of the Government in acting upon it.

The threat, however, is also material and strategic, constructed in terms of international relations but perceived as economic from the perspective of the right-wing press. This is evident in *The Mail's* article on Dr al-Masari, the Saudi dissident, part of its coverage of 'Saudi justice', 25/9. The implication is that by harbouring such dissidents, Britain is not well-placed to negotiate with Saudi. Masari is described as 'the key' (to the nurses freedom) but by protecting him, Britain is not looking after its own.⁴³ According to *The Guardian*, he 'has been the principal irritant to Britain's relations with Saudi Arabia for 3 years, is broke and virtually inactive' (11/1). British economic interests are paramount, 'His presence here has already marred multi-billion pound arms deals' (*The Mail*). According to *The Times*, he has 'jeopardised thousands of British defence jobs' (12/11). Another element of the discourse is prevalent here, that these dissidents make use of the 'soft' laws in Britain and abuse its hospitality but give nothing back. This is made explicit in terms of economy in both *The Mail* and *The Times*, which highlight his dependence on the British state; 'he has debts in Britain estimated at £100,000 and is currently living on social security' yet in relation to the British nurses he has 'washed his hands of their fate' (*The*

⁴² *The Mail* and *The Guardian* locate partisan roles here, *The Guardian* being more supportive of the Labour government.

⁴³ At this point in the coverage, *The Mail* focused on the nurses' innocence, reporting on the discrepancies in the evidence, evidence that clears them and the inadequacies of the Saudi justice system.

Mail). (Also see *The Mail*, 13/11, where this point is made 6 times in relation to an Iranian asylum seeker). This is an expression of the 'luxury immigrant myth' which has a persuasive function in making a case against asylum laws (van Dijk, 1991: 96). There is no mention of the kind of lifestyle these dissidents have often given up to fight their cause.

British tolerance is juxtaposed against the fundamentalists' lack of compassion and the repression of the pursuing 'regimes'.⁴⁴ As a result, Britain is conceptualised as being caught up in something that is removed from them, 'The tolerant and cosmopolitan capital has attracted dissidents and their persecutors' (*The Times*, 14/1). The last article appearing in *The Mail* is a letter entitled 'Too Tolerant', 'to read that Britain has been harbouring Moslem extremists organising and financing terrorism is appalling' (4/12) and in *The Guardian*, 'Arab and Muslim dissidents come to Britain because of a tradition of tolerance that was enjoyed by Karl Marx and Victor Hugo', 20/11. The dissidents are seen to benefit from British laws on freedom of speech. In *The Mail*, a letter expresses pride in this tradition but 'freedom to raise funds and incite violence should not be permitted' (4/12). This appears particularly hypocritical in the light of arguments advanced in opposition to the blasphemy laws. *The Times* suggests that the Saudi newspaper was a target for Islamic terrorists as the Editor is disliked for his 'insolence', 'it publishes news that is censored by local papers and takes full advantage of the press freedom...in London', 'Mr al-Khazen frequently receives telephone threats from the Arab world' (14/1). Britain appears to be engaged in diplomatic negotiations whilst Egypt is constructed as 'Irate' (*The Times*, 13/12). In this way the dichotomous relationship of 'them' and 'us' is established between repressive regimes and a free Britain, given as one of the reasons why dissidents seek refuge there. This opposition is often presented dramatically in images of place. The intolerance inherent in anti-immigration legislation is not covered.

The papers use discursive strategies to discredit the dissidents in order to mobilise support against their presence in the UK. In the al-Masari articles, there is greater variation in these strategies as the event is less extreme. In *The Times* this entails a character assassination based on the fact that he has talked 'himself into ruin'. There are various references to this which are also linked to his debts such as the phone bill. He is seen to be shifting the blame, quoted as saying 'It is true that we have these debts...But they are not

⁴⁴ The term 'regime' is used by the press to describe a totalitarian, undemocratic government and only applied in a negative context. Mullan shows how it has evolved from the 1950s when it was a neutral word meaning a system of government ('When is a terrorist a freedom fighter?' *The Guardian*, 29/8/98).

entirely of my doing. We will sort it out, I tell you'. This is undermined by quotes from former allies who believe he will never recover the debts, 'all his talk had made people wary of dealing with him'. It ends with a quote from his wife discrediting him, 'He is a manipulative character who could not care for anything. How could he run a country when he cannot even manage his own budget?' (12/1).

The Guardian, although also focusing on his debts and having the same goal as the other papers, is less aggressive and more pitiful. It gives more background and shows some sympathy for Masari's opposition to arms sales to dictatorships based on its own position, 'the campaign sparked anger among Britain's arm manufacturers, anxious that the dissidents activities would jeopardise Britain's role in the \$30 billion Al Yamamah project'. This fleeting reference to political credibility is eliminated due to his extremist views which has caused a shift of sympathy, 'fall from grace after publication of a newsletter calling for the annihilation of Jews'.

All three papers seek to discredit him through popular appeals to the distinct ideologies of the targeted audience, *The Guardian* on his dubious ideologies, *The Times* on his ignorance and *The Mail* on his exploitation of the welfare system at the expense of the taxpayer. One difference is that whilst *The Times* and *The Mail* appear to be contemptuous towards the dissidents, *The Guardian* constructs them as comical figures, impotent buffoons (see section on Omar Bakri, p. 193). This variation is evident in the photographs. Both *The Mail* and *The Times* use a mug shot, with al-Masari looking awkward (signifying criminality and guilt). *The Guardian* shows him in full size, sitting on a huge sofa, a small round figure appearing cheery. This has the effect of dispelling the threat to some extent. However, although these dissidents are not labelled as terrorists, the global coherence of the articles, in terms of the discourse that is employed in their treatment, means it is likely that they will be lumped together in the same category. One example of this is the penultimate article in *The Times* (24/11), concerned with dissidents aiding Egyptian extremist groups, it refers back to al-Masari as an example of the problems the Government has with taking action against extremists in the country (also *The Guardian* 20/11).

The coverage of these personal cases allows the discourse to be repeated, providing further evidence for the case against them. By discrediting them on personal terms, it avoids any charges of racism. The difference in the coverage of extreme violence being that the actors are dehumanised in order to be constructed as monstrous. Once constructed as the

undesirable immigrant, one course of action above others is preferred as a solution, in this case for deportation.⁴⁵

Government intervention

Because of the problematic nature of the issue, when accusations are made, the papers mitigate for the authorities. The Government is constructed as acting on the situation but is often thwarted in its attempts by soft laws and the courts. All papers refer to Michael Howard's attempts to deport Mohammed al-Masari, then to the Judge overruling this order in terms of 'but'. After the Luxor incident, all papers quoted Jack Straw's promise to review anti-terrorism legislation; 'There is a very serious *problem* of people from abroad, *particularly* the Middle East, seeking *to use* this country as a base, on the whole not for organising terrorism abroad but for financing it or for seeking support' (23/11), (emphasis added). This reliance on official sources and therefore official discourse means the reports are relatively closed around the official perspective. This mitigation is also applied to the police who 'are powerless to act' if the dissidents do not break any British laws (*The Mail*, 12/8). *The Times* devotes a whole article to measures the Government are taking to prevent terrorist activities on 24/11, 'London is not a terror haven say Ministers' (also *The Guardian*, 28/11). The repeated use of this ideology mobilises support for government action whilst not alienating the public from government. The papers resolve their ideological dilemma by constructing the 'problem' in various ways. They compel action but mitigate for the authorities who are conceptualised as devoid of responsibility, struggling to act to protect Britain in terms of security and its democratic principles but tied by current legislation. This paves the way for new laws on the Prevention of Terrorism, which make it a crime to organise terrorist campaigns in the UK, without opposition.

Omar Bakri Mohammad

A striking and lengthy feature on Omar Bakri Mohammad, the extremist leader of the group, al-Muhajiroun (the Emigrants), who was also the subject of a Channel 4 documentary, *Witness*, appeared in *The Guardian Weekend*, 29/3. About a Saudi dissident who raises funds for military causes abroad whilst 'living off the state', this article contains not only all the semantic conceptualisations already found in news articles on fundamentalism but also other dominant stereotypical images circulating in press discourse

⁴⁵ Which is within the law and provides a further contrast between Britain's lawful behaviour as opposed to the fundamentalist's unlawfulness.

in relation to Islam, encapsulated in the leader: 'Omar Bakri Mohammad is an Islamic fundamentalist. He wants to destroy the State of Israel, says that homosexuals are abominations, and that men and women should not mix freely in public. He's waging a holy war to impose these beliefs on his country. But that country is not where you might expect it to be. It's Britain.' However, the primary journalistic stylistic dimension of the commentary is ridicule. The comedic paradigm combined with the format, a feature, allows for greater leeway in the expression of material, in this case anti-Muslim racism, that would be unacceptable elsewhere. The major propositions are therefore exaggerated and subject to over-lexicalisation through the utilisation of the derogatory linguistic paradigms of madness, fear, conflict, violence, prohibition, extremism and separatism. It makes repeated use of Islamic terminology which has been popularised by the press, their meanings transformed, evident in the title of the article, 'Oh what a lovely jihad!' and the documentary, 'Tottenham Ayatollah'. These operate as simplistic but forceful categories of ridicule which rely on schemas of knowledge, through their repetitive use in the press, for their meanings. This allows 'jihad' to be recognised as a physical threat/war and 'Ayatollah' as a hard-line, authoritative, extremist. In the ten articles in *The Guardian* on Omar Bakri, there are 27 references to jihad, 26 to Jews, 17 to 'world', 12 to fundamentalism, 12 to death and 12 to threat. These and the three articles in *The Times* reproduce the same ideologies which establish an incompatible difference between 'Muslim' and 'Britishness'. Any good intentions of Bakri's actions are undermined through the syntactical structure which constructs him as ineffectual. The articles veer between extreme satire which nullifies the Islamic threat and a sinister menace epitomised in the final uncomfortable moment which sees the Jewish journalist overlooking money which is to be shipped out to Israel to fight the Jews. The caricature which counteracts the threat is therefore never ultimately realised. The explicit ideology to be found in this article is naturalised by the acceptance in other articles of its major propositions and objectivity. Being mainly reviews, they focus on the entertainment value of the documentary.

The ideology is exposed through the counter ideology of Omar Bakri in a letter to *The Daily Jang*, Britain's largest daily Urdu paper, 4/4. Having a serious and intellectual tone, it offers Bakri's understanding of the purpose of the film, 'We agreed that the film would address the struggle between civilisations in particular Islam and capitalism.' Part of the letter's aim is to expose the ideology present in Ronson's film, discrediting the

programme makers by focusing on their deception, apparent in the frequent references and plethora of terms relating to the assurances that there would be no 'animosity', 'fabrication', 'distortion' and 'demonisation'. However, Bakri's extreme position often results in the dominant discourse being confirmed by his own pronouncements, 'But the struggle will continue until Islam dominates the world'.

Criticisms of the use of Muslim extremists in the press provides the counter discourse prevalent in two letters appearing in *The Guardian*, 5/4, 26/4. These condemn a portrayal which 'fails to place Omar Bakri in a context of diverse and divergent schools of thought and belief within the Muslim community', R. Tuddenham, 5/4. Whilst appearing to accept the depiction of Bakri's character at face value, they object to the focus on extreme examples of Islam where there are few alternative images to provide balance.

These different interpretations of the same event are useful to illustrate the ideological construction that takes place through language. The difference lies in the power of different groups to access ideological structures which enables the dominant ideologies to prevail.

Decontextualisation

A typical element of conflict coverage is its decontextualisation. This is evident in all the coverage here, where events are dehistoricised and depoliticised. Very little background is given as to why dissidents seek asylum here, for example that al-Masari was involved in non-violent activities trying to democratise a corrupt regime. To be portrayed as 'a moderate, opposed to terrorism' would allow for audience identification (The Runnymede Trust, 1996: 2). This allows political actions to be removed from the political domain, to be constructed as illegitimate and the actors criminalised. Conceptualised as random, senseless acts of violence, the agents of these actions appear irrational. Resorting to violence constructs the Islamists as primitive in the context of the legitimate political negotiations of governments despite most of the dissidents being urban, educated, and middle class. Violence is given as a reason for action and without the political context appears to be an essential characteristic of the group portrayed, the discourse is therefore **naturalised**. The Saudi Ambassador is quoted in *The Times* after the al-Hayat newspaper bombing as saying 'Those who cannot face ideas resort to bombs. This is a criminal, cowardly act which illustrates the mentality of the perpetrators' (14/1). Any Western responsibility for the

conflicts taking place is omitted, the British government is seen to be justifiably responding to the provocations of others.

Homogeneity

Only in the features on Omar Bakri Mohammed, where the extreme is exaggerated for comical effect, is there any attempt to differentiate between Muslim groups; 'the majority of Muslims who live in Britain are far from being fundamentalists, there is nevertheless a great deal of mutual incomprehension between our communities,' (Will Self, *The Observer*, 13/4). (Also see *The Times*, 13/4, A.A. Gill). These type of 'admissions' (van Dijk, 1991) avoid accusations of racism. Even so, the Muslim community is constructed as problematic in their 'difference'.

Many of the news articles make no attempt to differentiate and actually construct links between the general community and militants, 'As far as Islam is concerned, he (Mubarak) is now a legitimate target. If a Muslim kills Mubarak tomorrow he is performing a legitimate act because he is responding to the courts verdict' (Omar Bakri Mohammed, quoted in *The Observer*, 23/11). About half of the articles in *The Guardian* display this tendency, the dissident, Dr Masari, is said to 'still receives some funds from Britain's Muslim community'. In relation to extremists targeting Egypt, it is said that collections are 'left inside mosques and Islamic cultural centres throughout Britain' (23/11, *The Observer*, *The Times*, 24/11, 13/12). Despite the comical effects in *The Guardian's* feature on Omar Bakri, he is also referred to in more serious news stories so the exaggerated elements of the feature take on a more sinister reality. In *The Guardian*, in the aftermath of Luxor, a news story on fund-raisers for the terrorists lists Omar Bakri as 'an important fund-raiser'. Some of the extremist actions he has organised are mentioned such as sentencing the Egyptian president to death in Trafalgar Square, 23/11. He is then associated with both moderate dissidents and the Muslim community, al-Masari says of Omar Bakri's group Al-Muhajiroun, 'I don't know if my relationship with them is wise, that may be questionable, but they are certainly a very efficient organisation and have a lot of contacts in the Muslim community' (11/1). In the global coherence of articles then, Muslims are linked together.

Despite this, Muslims are also constructed as sectarian by constantly referring to the splitting of factions and groups. This not only implies a conflictual nature but adds to a conception of Muslims as ideologically weak and using their religion manipulatively.

Categorisation

Through an analysis of categorisation, ideological bias is exposed. Through a linguistic paradigm of conflict, rather than the use of political language, terrorist and fundamentalist activity is marked of as illegitimate and thus punitive action can be legitimately taken against the protagonists.⁴⁶ Yet this discourse appears neutral purely by its institutionalised state. This categorisation is essential for comprehension of these stories and once categorised in this way has allowed a channel of continuity to be opened whereby subsequent stories can be labelled as fundamentalism and treated in a uniform manner. In the frequency of their use, the terms contribute to the reproduction and therefore the reality of the categories, having a normalising effect.

Table 4.7 shows how newspapers give discursive attention to terrorism. Muslims are subject to negative labelling, associated with bombing, killing, extremism and terrorism but are not recognised as political activists.

Table 4.7: Terms used to describe Islamists in Fundamentalism articles excluding those on Omar Bakri.

	<i>The Daily Mail</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Times</i>	Total
Terrorism/rist	12	23	36	70
Bomber/bombs	2	16	18	36
Killer/kill/killed	11	13	7	33
Asylum/seeker	11	12	4	28
Militant	2	11	7	20
Exile	0	3	13	16
Extremism/ist	3	4	8	15
Dissident	2	7	5	14
Radical/ism	0	4	6	10
Islamist	0	4	4	8
Fundamentalist	3	2	2	7
Activist	1	2	1	4
Total number of articles in paper	5	9	6	20

What is also apparent is that the use of fundamentalism is low in all papers as journalists increasingly refrain from using the word due to uncertainty over its meaning, publicity over its misuse and its Christian connotations. This is particularly evident in the broadsheets. *The Mail* uses it only a few times but in 3 of its 5 articles and more often than

⁴⁶ Research shows that public opinion is overwhelmingly opposed to organisations defined in the media as 'terrorist' (Hewitt, 1992; Weimann, 1983).

more positive terms such as activist and Islamist. However, I would argue that the connotations with the word have gained such currency that it is no longer necessary for it to be used for the event to be interpreted as such. The decline in the use of the term fundamentalist has not led to the use of more positive terms in general. *The Mail* employs a more restrictive level of lexicalisation, limited to extreme negativisation. *The Guardian* and *The Times*, whilst showing greater diversity, employ a similar lexical classification in their use of negative evaluative terms.⁴⁷

The proliferation of words used to describe the Islamist is indicative of press preoccupation with the participants in these events (rather than the processes) and evidence of where the problem is located by the press. The excess use of quasi-synonymous terms here signifies the dehumanising processes at work which renders the Islamist abnormal. This allows the ‘‘abnormality and extremism’’ of fundamentalism to be contrasted with the moderation and reasonableness of Western hegemony’ (Said, 1994: 376 quoted in Sayyid, 1997: 31). This lexicalisation is not applied to the authorities who are attributed with positive evaluative terms such as ‘condemning terrorism’.

By continually associating religiosity with crime in terms of ‘Islamic terrorism’, the influence of the religion in their behaviour is implied. In this way Iganatieff argues, ‘Muslim means fundamentalist. Fundamentalist means fanatic’ (cited in UKACIA, 1993: 4). This position can be used to justify continuing discrimination towards Muslims.

Counter discourse

From a liberal position, *The Guardian* is critical of restrictive asylum laws and therefore provides spaces for alternative perspectives based on its definition of genuine need. This being a non-violent, human rights, moderate activist who has not expressed any statements offensive to the paper’s ideologies and is under threat from a repressive regime.

⁴⁷ In preliminary small-scale research with 2nd year BSc Communications students at the University of Leicester, these four words, most commonly used in the press, were considered to be the most negative. Twenty-six students were asked to identify which of those words, shown in Table 4.7, they thought to be positive, negative or neutral, without knowing the context within which the words were used. All but one (96%) said terrorism was negative, in addition to kill 85%, extremist 80% and bomb 77%. Sixty-nine per cent also said militant was a negative word, 46% fundamentalism and 46% exile. Otherwise these, and all of the other words, were found to be mainly neutral. The only terms deemed to have any positive connotations were activist 30%, asylum seeker 15% and fundamentalist 11%. Even those words perceived as mainly neutral were thought to be negative by a considerable number: e.g. dissident, 27% and radical, 31%. Although there is no indication here of other variables involved, that possibly more critical media students found the words most commonly used in the press to be negative is evidence of the role of the press in the reproduction of meanings which are extracted from and gain further currency in society. That words such as militant and extremist are found to be negative is illustrative of the centrist politics of students (and generally) in the late 1990s.

Exemplifying what *The Guardian* defines as a 'real asylum seeker', is an article about a Pakistani dissident, a non-violent activist who is campaigning for democracy in his home country over the phone from the UK. Although fairly light hearted and appearing partly for this novelty value, it develops a more serious tone towards the end, listing atrocities committed in Pakistan, as he 'called for an end to the feudal, corrupt and repressive nature of Pakistan's politics' (20/1).

These men are categorised differently, either in admiration, 'martyr', 'passionate', 'skilful' or in sympathy, 'frail', 'sadly emaciated', 'weak'. They are conceptualised as having convictions rather than blind absolutism, 'Man's burning hunger for asylum' of the hunger striker (2/2) and their activities are contextualised in terms of political asylum. The articles are free from the consistent and dominant themes present in the others. In direct contrast to those constructed as fundamentalist, the Government's tough line is criticised, they are 'being treated like criminals' (2/2).

However, these articles tend to be incidental (there are only two this year), arising from a human affairs approach, rather than critically analysing the structural racism inherent in the laws.⁴⁸

The foreign element of this coverage occasionally allows Muslims in Britain to be constructed as moderates as expressed in the coverage of the bombing of the moderate Arab newspaper. However, this appears to have political expediency, and on more occasions, militants are linked to the Muslim community rather than differentiated.

A further article in *The Guardian* following the Luxor incident affords a whole page feature dedicated to examining Islam in Britain, the 'Islamophobia' that occurs as a result of media images of fundamentalists and the origins of the term fundamentalist (20/11). This is typical of some of the spaces *The Guardian* opens up to explore a more positive image of British Muslims, recognising prejudice and differentiating between extreme groups and the general majority. However, this is compounded in the same article by a section on 'the dissidents' which reinforces the negative interpretations I have identified before.

Any alternative ideology, then, is weakened by the consistency of the dominant consensus in reporting. All papers this year end with a discussion on the problem of asylum seekers in Britain organising terrorist activities for action abroad.

⁴⁸ This is also due to the race relations framework in the UK whereby many people applying for asylum will be categorised on the basis of race.

Conclusion

This topic represents Muslims as an alien force undermining British interests on a number of levels. The papers use a variety of consistent strategies to mobilise support for action to be taken to remove the threat (similarly on an international scale, the image of the Muslim fundamentalist allows repressive action to be taken against foreign countries so Western hegemony can be maintained). Part of this process includes decontextualisation which results in Muslims being categorised negatively. These categories are naturalised through decontextualisation and homogenisation binds them to all Muslims. However, to some extent and depending on the extremism of the event being reported, the discourse works to dispel the threat by constructing Muslims as divided and ineffectual. This allows Britain to maintain its position of superiority.

The mixture of religion and politics with violence alienates the Islamists' positions from any sympathy with the mainstream political philosophies in the UK (due to assumptions based on Britain's historical development grounded in the Enlightenment). The discursive unity means there is little contestation or struggle over the language on this issue. Only the struggle to contain the terrorists through the state is represented. The repetitive discourse, whereby the ideology is made explicit on a regular basis, is a feature of the coverage of this topic. Each story confirms the patterns of behaviour of the homogenised group as they act out their essentialised characteristics. However, the foreign element allows some distance to be constructed between the fundamentalist and the majority of Muslims in Britain. Although people may recognise that these images do not represent the norm, enough links are made to the Muslim community to imply a connection, with few representations of moderate Muslims to balance this.

Crime and Politics: The Case of Mohammed Sarwar

Having been topical in previous years, this story explodes in 1997 to become the most frequently occurring and highly visible story on British Muslims of the year.⁴⁹ Having previously been accused of underhand activities in securing the candidacy for the Govan Labour seat, following his election in May, Mohammed Sarwar was accused of trying to

⁴⁹ Other coverage of political events associated with British Muslims in 1997 includes coverage of the General Election and Norman Tebbit's speech on multiculturalism to the Conservative Party conference which provoked heated debate, and is argued by some to illustrate the further shift in the unacceptability of public discourse which advocates exclusivity.

bribe an opponent, the unofficial Labour candidate, Badar Islam, offering him £5000 to fight a losing campaign. These allegations appeared in the *News of the World*, 18/5, who had involved Mr Islam in arranging an illicit meeting with Sarwar which was taped to provide evidence. Once it transpired that Sarwar had paid the money to Islam, albeit according to Sarwar as a loan to a member of the community in financial difficulty, not a bribe, other allegations arose concerning vote rigging. He was suspended from the Labour Party in June and charged in December.

The volume of coverage on this story, 54 articles over the four papers, is due to its political nature. In particular, its news value at the time was related to its definition as the first example of sleaze in the New Labour government. 'Sleaze' was coined by the press with the purpose of hounding out the previous Conservative government by defining different examples of political crime, which had previous currency, under one derogatory ideological term effective in deriding Conservative 'myths' of competence (Lacey and Longman, 1997). According to van Dijk (1983), the use of these terms deeply affects people's understanding of events by concretising their definition, providing an artificial coherence between them. This results in generalisations being made, based on methods of newspaper reading whereby full details are rarely assimilated. The Government therefore appeared to be ridden with an elemental corruption.

The Labour Party participated in this categorisation, fighting a major part of its election campaign on eliminating sleaze from government. Tony Blair was also highly critical of John Major's 'weak leadership' in dealing with sleaze. By defining this story as an example of sleaze, it was used by the press as an indicator of the intentions of the new government and a test of Blair's leadership. However, other incidents of 'sleaze' in the Labour Party occurring at this time received far less press attention. I would argue that this particular incident had added news value because:

- 1) Sarwar is an Asian and Britain's first Muslim MP, therefore his behaviour came to be an indicator of the Muslim community in Britain. Sarwar's wealth and 'rags to riches' life story also gave it an extra dimension of interest.

- 2) The constituency had already achieved news value from previous rivalries and infighting.

As well as being a party political issue of governmental standards, this story was also an indicator of minority relations under Labour. This research has shown how coverage

of British Muslims often represents their exclusion from political structures and struggle for political participation. Having finally gained political representation, this position was undermined. By attempting to fix Sarwar's guilt, the papers confirm the ideology reproduced in other stories. The meta-narrative regarding Muslims in Britain encapsulated in total coverage and culminating in this story reads that Muslims bring with them (from elsewhere) abhorrent practices which corrupt British systems. This requires negative repressive action. The struggle over power in the political domain is represented in the press in a way that sustains power relations.

The reproduction of the key discourses across articles results in a wealth of evidence which could be employed to support my arguments. However, the extensive analysis of this case can not be explicated in fine detail due to the volume of coverage. Because of this, and the discursive unity in coverage of this story, it seems appropriate to concentrate on the major articulations of the discourses occurring within the macroassertions and the way they relate to each other, along with the major semantic strategies employed with the goal of discrediting Sarwar without being labelled racist. Discourse employed includes primitivism, sectarianism, disloyalty, cultural differences, deviance, economy, nation, identity, democracy, racism and political.

Appearing mainly in news form (81%), being an example of hard news, this is the only story covered more by *The Times* (23 articles) than *The Guardian* (18). This may be due to the ownership of both *The News of the World* and *The Times*, Murdoch's News International, known for its cross-media interests. Whereas both papers have an equal amount of news reports (17), *The Times* provides additional commentary including the only two letters printed. Coverage is less in the tabloids due to their particular news values which focus less on political issues. They cover the breaking story and consequences, then only significant stages in development, allowing for the expression of political and xenophobic tendencies but not being too extensive to disinterest the reader. Breaking on the 18/5, with the allegations, in *The Times* and *Guardian* (picked up by the tabloids on the 19th), developments included: Sarwar's issuing of a writ for libel, his admittance that he gave the money to Islam 'but in the form of a loan', the launch of Labour's inquiry and his suspension (June), further allegations made by *The News of the World* (June), the collation and release of the police report (August, *The Times* only) and finally Sarwar's appearance in court to be charged (December). The broadsheets covered all these developments, initial

coverage running for seven days up to 26/5. This included, in early coverage in all papers, albeit briefly in *The Sun*, some background to Sarwar's career and the constituency, (19/20 May). In *The Mail* the story runs for four days initially, features Sarwar's suspension in June and the charges in December, amounting in total to 8 articles. *The Sun* covers only the initial two days (omitting the libel writ issued by Sarwar) and the charges (5 articles). Neither papers cover Sarwar's appearance in court the following day when he issues a denial. This illustrates both the lack of political depth and analysis in these papers and the discursive closure around the accusations, suspension and charges. The event is covered so far that it fulfils its ideological function. However, nor do the broadsheets cover all aspects of the story. An additional 11 news articles appear in the *Scottish Sunday Times* due to its specific interest in terms of locality. However, quantity does not mean a full debate ensues, and the additional coverage here works to add extra weight to the paper's particular stance. In this case, the paper uses selective evidence from witnesses to build a case against Sarwar, embedding any response from his point of view in a wealth of contrary evidence, making his arguments seem implausible; 'Sarwar aide: new malpractice claims' (8th June), 'Candidate 'sacked for standing against Sarwar' (20 July). Although the paper does give more weight to the viewpoint of ordinary people in the Asian community, again, this is usually to present evidence against Sarwar, 'Asians in fear of being shamed' (25th May). It is likely that there are local political reasons for the stance of the *Scottish Sunday Times* on this particular issue related to historical events that may have had an impact on the community or due to specific interests of the paper in Scotland. Part of the explicit discourse of the *Scottish Sunday Times*, which is only implicated by the activities of Sarwar in the national press, is that of morality. In relation to overall coverage of British Muslims, the moral highground they are often reported to take is juxtaposed against actual behaviour.

The events surrounding Sarwar were also referred to in a further 21 articles in *The Times*, mainly in relation to sleaze but also at the time of voting on devolution (Sarwar's face was used in an advertising campaign against devolution). It occurs in 4 other articles in *The Guardian* in relation to sleaze. This illustrates the cohesive effects of the label, giving solidity to the definition and our understanding of the Sarwar story on these terms.

Corruption, Sleaze: Guilty as charged

The activities that Sarwar is alleged to have been involved in are a series of examples of malpractice in politics. These activities are automatically labelled as examples

of sleaze. The cumulative description of illegal activities surrounding Sarwar is one of the strategies used by the papers to insinuate guilt. Thus, the dominant linguistic paradigm employed is that of corruption. Sarwar and the constituency are associated with malpractice, corruption, scandal, crisis, bribery, dirty tricks, misconduct, impropriety, smears, back-stabbing, vote-rigging, skulduggery, dishonesty. This overlexicalisation signals the abnormality of these events, maintaining the integrity of the British political system. This also works to exacerbate the severity of the situation, evident in the syntactical complexity of the statement expounding the charges against him, he is 'facing criminal charges relating to the late registration of voters, attempting to pervert the course of justice and contravention's of the Representation of the People Act in connection with election expenses' (*The Times*, 17/12), these are 'fraud, forgery, theft and deception' (*The Guardian*, 17/12).⁵⁰ Little linguistic variety occurs across papers, binding Sarwar to criminal actions.

. These allegations are classified lexically as 'sleaze', the most consistent lexicalisation, occurring 26 times. Constructed through metaphor and imagery, creating an impression of the amount of allegations involved: according to *The Times* (22/5) it is 'an avalanche' and *The Observer* describes it as 'a tide of sleaze as deep and cloying as the toxic waters of the Clyde' (25/5).

Whilst quickly defined as Labour's first 'crisis' (*Times*, 18,19/5, 17/12) or 'scandal' (*Mail*, 19/5), escalating its impact, due to support for New Labour, all papers except *The Mail* distance Sarwar from the Government, 'Sleazy Tide Ends Tony's Easy Ride' (*The Sun*, 19/5).⁵¹ The papers attempt to mitigate for the Government by personalising the activities, Sarwar is compared to 'a festering sore which distracts attention from the Premier's positive policy announcements' (*The Sun*, 19/5). Whilst all papers take this stance, *The Guardian* is cautious at first, only when it becomes clear that money was exchanged does it fully distance Labour from Sarwar. For *The Mail*, however, Sarwar is an example of Labour sleaze, 'Labour will be badly damaged' (19/5). This enables the paper to discredit the Government by showing how quickly it is 'facing a sleaze crisis'.

⁵⁰ In contrast to how it was reported in the Muslim paper, *Q-News*, as the 'minor charges' of 'exceeding electoral expenses and back-dating voters onto the electoral role' (February 1998, No. 285, p. 9).

⁵¹ Linton (1995) argues that 1995 saw a huge swing to Labour by traditionally Conservative papers whilst still supporting conservatism. *The Sun* has made this explicit whilst *The Times* tends to remain faithful to its readership.

To some extent this sleaze is related to Old Labour local councils. This allows *The Mail* to suggest that whilst New Labour may be in power, Old Labour is in control of local politics, raising fears about Socialism endemic in the lexical choice of 'dictators'; 'Power that corrupted the Old Labour dictators' (19/5). Although this idea is also prevalent in *The Times*, 'Labour's rotten borough' (Linklater, 22/5, 18/12), it functions as a warning that if Labour do not deal with these constituencies, they will be equally perceived as corrupt (and so attempting to remove the left from politics). However, Sarwar is generally perceived as a New Labour man, accounting for the distancing between him and the Party.

Part of *The Mail's* strategy to discredit Sarwar is by making associations with sexual deviance: prostitutes and an illegitimate child, which adds to the conceptualisation of 'sleaze' (21/5). It attributes these propositions to a third party, another tabloid, thus maintaining some credibility above the 'gutter' press whilst still projecting these ideas into the public domain.

The weight given to the allegations in the macrostructure of the articles which allows Sarwar only a brief denial marginalised to the end, appearing often flippant in the context, 'Of course it's all completely untrue', raises questions about his innocence and amounts to trial by the press. Semantic strategies used to intensify his guilt include:

1. providing overwhelming evidence implicating Sarwar with crime which include: accusations by additional 'poll rivals' (20, 21/5); Tariq Malik, Mr Islam's agent, is said by the *News of the World* to have witnessed the hand-over of money. Only *The Times* reports his denial of this (26/5); the *News of the World* reports on Sarwar's aides trying to buy their legal files on the case (*Times* 15/6, *Guardian* 16/6). An article in *The Guardian* on the 22/5 lists the evidence against him in the form of 'key players' and their allegations;
2. following Sarwar's denials or positive information with disclaimers: 'Throughout, although isolated Sarwar maintained his innocence', But, 'The scale of the charges against Mr Sarwar and their associations with sleaze' (*The Times* 22/5, 17/12). These 'buts' cast the weight of the argument on the qualification whilst allowing the papers to appear balanced and fair. Sarwar's perspective is increasingly marginalised as evidence accumulates against him, his denial being the only aspect of his perspective featured. This is interpreted as an unwillingness to comment which 'hardly inspires renewed trust' (*The Times*, 21/5). He is also seen as being

unable to produce any witnesses who will proclaim his innocence, *The Guardian* describes how 'he promised' to get evidence from an 'alleged witness' but the witness refused to sign any statement. This suggests Sarwar cannot keep his promises. The use of 'alleged' suggests that the paper is engaging in belief suspension (19/5);

3. uncovering subversive connections (Sarwar's aides involved in dubious activities, 15/6, 16/6);
4. making unfavourable evaluative judgements about Sarwar; he is subject to a plethora of negative predicates and attributives that signal a flawed and deviant personality (see Corruption, p. 203);
5. using negative evaluative modality; 'The assertion, by friends of Mr Sarwar that moneys handed over were innocent loans does nothing to reassure observers' (*The Guardian* 19/5);
6. making reference to past offences in the constituency: *The Guardian*, *The Mail* 19/5; *The Times*, 20/5;
7. Labour's suspension of Sarwar is interpreted as their lack of confidence and trust in him, which is used to confirm the papers' stance. Labour's inquiry found that 'enough evidence had been accumulated to find Mr Sarwar guilty of bringing the party into disrepute' (13/6);
8. the closure around the charges in December without any discussion has the same effect. These articles give little detail surrounding the original event but highlight the charges of election fraud that have been made and his suspension and appearance in court. The fact that 'he made no plea or declaration and was released on bail' works to intensify his guilt (18/12);
9. the selective use of evidence and sources, this includes sources from his own community allowing articles to be seen as objective and non-racist (*The Times*, 18/5). A whole article appears in *The Observer*, (25/5), written by one of Sarwar's aides, which discredits him, 'Mohammed Sarwar is unfit for office and should quit his key lieutenant says'. This headline is syntactically organised to fit the form of a statement.

Each of these assertions adds damaging new evidence to the case against Sarwar, raising doubts about Sarwar's motivations and reputation, aggravating reader reproach and

making alternative information less believable. Personifying the story shields the papers from accusations of racism and crucially individualises the crime exonerating Labour but more importantly shifting blame from the system, which prevents access to some groups, to the problem of an individual (and by collectivising the crime, problematising Muslims generally).

Visual strategies also criminalise Sarwar. Almost half of the articles incorporate photographs. These both personalise and neutralise the ideology in the texts. The majority of these are passport style which create the impression of a criminal mugshot, dark and shadowy. Sarwar remains unsmiling and avoids eye contact in all but two. The captions situate the meaning for the reader, offering a quick interpretation of events, 'Sarwar: £5000', 'Sarwar: embarrassing' and are ambiguous enough to insinuate guilt. Two are particularly effective in grounding the textual ideology. A side-on head shot, enlarged to enhance the expressive dimension of the photo appears in *The Guardian* twice, when Sarwar admits to supplying the money and when he is charged in December (Appendix k, Figure 1). Most of the head is concealed by someone's shoulder. Sarwar peers over it. The effect is demonising. Sarwar looks devious, sly and guilty. The other appears in the last *Guardian* article after Sarwar appears in court (Appendix k, Figure 3). A large picture, it shows Sarwar leaving court, disgruntled, his lawyer behind him, hand on shoulder. The caption reads: 'Mohammed Sarwar leaves court in Glasgow yesterday, his lawyer behind him'. Given the context of the article and its positioning adjacent to another one on Labour sleaze but in that one, the Prime Minister is seen to be backing the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, this implies, that Sarwar's lawyer alone is behind him. He is in political isolation. This is reinforced in all the photographs by localising Sarwar in the street, outside any authority giving structures.

Categorisation

'Millionaire MP': Sarwar's financial status is of interest to all papers. Through a lexical register of wealth he is categorised financially in a number of ways, both with negative and positive connotations. Admiration for his ambition, entrepreneurialism and work ethic coincides with important Western values, 'Wealth from humble beginnings' (*The Mail*, 19/5). Ethnocentrism constructs him as a 'great catch', an 'ideal candidate', a 'local hero', and 'role model for Asian voters'. However, these qualities are transformed into negative traits, the discourse of economy serves to discredit him by linking his success to

corruption. Any positive characteristics he is perceived to have or had are undermined by 'political' and 'personal ambition'. He is therefore portrayed as an opportunist, greedy, manipulative and ruthless in his drive for power and success; 'Why was a multimillionaire who sends his four children to private schools standing in one of Britain's poorest constituencies?' (*The Guardian*, 25/5 and 20, 26/5; 17/12). This is formulated as a family characteristic by *The Times* which suggests that the accumulation of money was a priority, his father having left for Scotland for work, which is regarded as abandonment, 'he saw him only once but money arrived from his father' (19/5).

The positive features he was considered to have possessed before the allegations are used as a contrast to how he should now be judged. This functions as a warning that we should not be so gullible in the future; 'There is no doubting his achievements as a businessman...Immensely hard-working...But' (*The Guardian*, 18/12). *The Times* devotes its last article to this macroassertion; 'From local hero to outcast, the tragedy of Mohammed Sarwar', which sees him discarded whilst the validity of the evidence against him is still untested (18/12).

That Sarwar has 'made it to the top' through corrupt and dishonourable means takes on a racial element in both *The Times* and *The Guardian* by association with political practices in Pakistan (*Guardian*, 25/5; *Times*, 19/5). According to Yuval-Davis and Silverman (1998), this racialised discourse has its origins in Orientalist conceptions of the over-rich oil Sheikhs of the 1970s. Shifts in their economic class positionings due to oil-wealth, it is argued, led to their demonisation based on envy (by the West). This is evident in the frequently used metonymia: 'Muslim millionaire'. Sarwar's economic and social standing is therefore undermined by the use of low status terms such as 'cash-and carry tycoon'. Although this can be recognised as a racial stereotype in that many wealthy MP's are not categorised in such a way, this categorisation is used more generally by the press in relation to political corruption as an indicator of criminal greed, provoking dislike for the central character. This conceptualisation is also applied to Sarwar's Asian colleagues (*Times*, 15/6; *Guardian*, 16/6).

'British Muslim MP': The operation of the discourse in this story relies on a cultural conception of Sarwar as a Muslim MP. Sarwar is clearly identified as a Muslim in 77.7% of all articles, 42 out of the 54 (See Table 4.8). The mobilisation of Muslim identity has specific goals, allowing the discourse relating to this topic to be associated with the

formulae, evoking their meanings whenever it is used. Thus, pre-existing beliefs about Muslims can be reproduced in the evaluation of Sarwar, popular assumptions and prejudices make what is said about him seem plausible. This categorisation is based on the increasing visibility of Muslims, partly as a response to their own desire to be identified as such (we rarely see other MP's labelled in such a way). One might argue then that this identification is necessary as a cultural indicator for Muslims and generally. However, this categorisation allows the press to associate, in their evaluation, Sarwar's inappropriate behaviour to his identity (chosen or not). It is the actions to which this label is associated where its importance lies, the negative activities of corruption and sleaze. The other frequently applied metonym is 'bribe MP'. Its ambiguity allows guilt to be derived if little else but top-level information is read. The interchangeability of these definitions of Sarwar not only inextricably links deviant behaviour to Muslimness but allows the worth of Islamic values (and the sincerity of Muslims) to be questioned. This is evident in the juxtaposition of Sarwar, having made his oath to parliament on the Koran, with the allegations (18/5) and then the charges (18/12).

As 'Britain's first Muslim MP', this aspect of his identity becomes most significant. (In the macrostructure of the article, it appears most prominently in *The Times* where it is always included in the 1st to 2nd paragraph, followed by *The Mail* (2nd to 4th) then *The Sun* and *Guardian* where it appears randomly). Through this, Sarwar becomes a representative for all Britain's Muslims (above his status as representative of the Govan constituency) and a highly visible indicator of their behaviour (attributed with the 'burden of responsibility'). Generalisations are fostered through connections with the community, 'he has raised funds for a Glasgow mosque and was elected secretary of the Central mosque in 1986. About 90% of Govan's 5,000 Asians are Muslim.' (*The Times*, 19/5).

Numerous examples are provided which show the Asian community engaged in similar behaviour, including Sarwar's colleagues. Examples in relation to election fraud include; 'Most came from 4 streets with a large Asian population' (*The Sun*); 'a 16 year old Asian was charged with impersonating his dead father when he went to vote' (*Mail*, 19/5); 'The number of voters, especially those of Asian origin who voted late in Govan is curious' (Leading Article, *The Times*, 21/5), this dishonesty is contrasted with the 'ordinary voters who suggest sharp practice is deeply disturbing'. When Sarwar's aides seek to help Sarwar by attempting to buy the *News of the Worlds* legal files, they are quoted as saying 'We have

got to help Mr Sarwar in any way we can. As Muslim brothers this is our duty. If the whip is withdrawn there will be a national outrage. We will do our utmost to make sure Muslims up and down the country screw the Labour Party' (*The Times*, 15/6; *The Guardian*, 16/6). This admission or threat of Muslim action from within serves to justify any suspicions the majority may have had about Muslims in politics, and comes from Muslims themselves.

Table 4.8: Number of articles where Sarwar is identified as a Muslim

	Labelled: 'British Muslim MP'	Total articles identified as Muslim	No identification
<i>The Times</i>	13 56%	18 78%	5 21%
<i>The Guardian</i>	11 61%	13 72%	5 28%
<i>The Mail</i>	8 100%	8 100%	0
<i>The Sun</i>	3 60%	3 60%	2 40%
Total	35 64.8%	42 77.7%	12 22.2%

The use of Asian and Muslim is interchangeable in the reporting of this story, with no attempt to differentiate (*The Times*, 19, 20/5). The fusing of religious and ethnic identity allows further generalisations to be made. Sarwar's Pakistani origins allows a discourse to be constructed around the myth of corrupt Pakistani politics which emerges as a significant explanatory factor. The negative and homogenising evaluation of Pakistani politics as endemically corrupt is naturalised making it appear to be a consequence of the essential characteristics of Pakistanis. By comparing both the corruption and infighting in the Govan constituency to Sarwar's involvements in politics in Pakistan, implies that through immigration, these practices have infiltrated British political culture, corrupting it. This is made explicit in two articles which appear together in *The Guardian* that contrast Sarwar's 'first taste for politics in a turbulent period in Pakistan' to 'bribery claim is latest in string of Govan seat rows' (19/5). An inherent cultural clash is implied, apparent in the headline of an *Observer* article, 'The worst of both worlds met and the result was disaster..... Those close to Sarwar say 2 worlds collided in the car park that day; the dirty world of Glasgow politics and the Pakistani business world where money is given and lent in the community' (25/5).

Sarwar is constructed as an immigrant for this purpose, the tabloids in particular give lexical emphasis to his status as 'Pakistan-born Mr Sarwar (*Mail*, 19, 20, 21/5, 17/12;

The Sun 19/5, 17/12). Although 'not legally entitled to enter the country as a dependent, he was determined to get here somehow.....Four years later, his Uncle provide Mr Sarwar with the answer-marriage to his daughter Perveen. He agreed, he said, because, 'I would be able to go to Britain' (*Mail*, 19/5, also repeated on 17/12). The syntactical order of events here simplifies and reduces complex historical processes for an ideological purpose. This allows the threat and pollution to be perceived as having migrated from an external origin (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1982).

Sectarianism

Part of the strategy used in reinforcing the political and racial discourse is to focus on the factionalism prevalent in the Govan constituency. In the local coherence in the structure of articles and the global coherence of articles, this appears to have two origins: political (Old Labour) and racial (Pakistani politics). In a similar way to corruption, this is partly achieved by the accumulation of evidence and information formulated within a graphical lexical register of conflict and warfare. Govan is referred to as having 'The battles of Backstab City', 'For more than 3 years ...racked with infighting' and is compared to 'open warfare' where the actors are 'tearing lumps out of each other' (*Mail*, 19/5). 'Hostilities flare again in Govan's political dirty war' in *The Times*, (20, 22/5), implies repeated and corrupt antagonism with temperamental actors. *The Guardian* describes the constituency as a 'fiefdom' 'wracked by years of conspiracy and infighting' and Sarwar as having 'infuriated key workers' and 'wrecked the political consensus' in Govan (21, 22, 25/5). 'Britain's first Muslim MP proves adept at making enemies' (*The Guardian*, 22/5), the local coherence of this headline, which uses the lexical choice of Muslim rather than Labour, attributes him with a conflictual nature connected to his Muslim identity.

This is also achieved by relating facts such as the borough's characteristics to the infighting, implying a relationship between the two. According to *The Times*, Govan has the 'highest ethnic population of any of Glasgow's seats, at about 11%, 9.6% of whom are Asians from Pakistan'. This appears in an article on the 'hostilities' (20/5). Minorities are constructed as a problem for Labour and for Britain. *The Times* suggests that Labour's relationship with minorities, in particular Muslims, is 'strained' as they have 'created some unforeseen difficulties for Labour' (19/5). In an article on the problems of encouraging minorities into politics due to their aggressive campaigning, it writes of the 'infiltration of local parties by Asian members'. It quotes Labour MP, Roger Godsiff who 'called for a

review of Labour membership rules to guard against any 'entryism' by any faction' (19/5). Labour is constructed as struggling to control its minority groups (by implication they need controlling). Bradford, where, to obtain power, minorities are seen to be engaged in irregular activities, is used as an illustration; 'The party was forced to intervene amid allegations of membership irregularities when the Bradford West constituency party attempted to oust its MP, Max Madden'. They were found guilty of misconduct and suspended. The implication is that not only do Muslims use irrational and extreme methods to get into power but cannot be trusted as once in power will act against the majority.

The political struggle, then, is represented as a 'row', incorporating the personal ambitions of individuals therefore removing the political context. This continual discrediting of Sarwar's opponents does give some credibility to Sarwar. Badar Islam, for example, is subject to an Orientalist discourse associated with sexual deviance, aggression, gambling, deceit, financial ineptitude and bestial imagery (*Mail*, 19, 20/5; *Guardian*, 19/5; *Times*, 21/5). In this way, it is implied that they may be motivated by jealousy. But Sarwar is equally derided, indicating none can be trusted. This practice is particularly explicit in a *Times* article (20/5) on the hostilities in Govan which sees each actor making claims and counter claims with regard to colleagues in their constituency. The New Labour government remains the only actor with any credibility.

Although this fragmentation in some way acknowledges differences between Asians, it homogenises them by constructing them as all engaged in primitive conflict, conflict which is contrary to a 'realistic group conflict explanation' (Levine and Campbell, 1972). However, in creating this illusion, it also works to promote tensions amongst rival groups, a strategy based on 'divide and conquer' which encourages groups to fight amongst themselves rather than against the white majority. These (Asian) practices are then constructed as intrinsically primitive and undemocratic, a concern made explicit in *The Observer*, 'bribery in elections pollutes democracy itself' (20/5).

Anti anti-racism

As well as denying racism, 'it is not racist to say that many Asian members campaign more actively, some would say aggressively for their cause' (*The Times*, 19/5), the papers are quick to pre-empt any attempts to provide social and political explanations, in this case racism, for these circumstances by arguing that such a move would be an excuse for criminal activity and a way of escaping normal procedures. They construct a water tight

argument that minorities are guilty of 'crying discrimination' (*Observer*, 25/5). As it occurs, it can then be dismissed and Muslims can be accused of using racism manipulatively and shifting blame (*The Guardian*, 19/5).⁵² This also serves as a warning to anti-racist groups and in particular to the Government not to yield to this. In *The Guardian*, a Labour MP is quoted as saying, 'If he were white, he would have been suspended on Sunday but the Party's conscious every Muslim in Britain thinks this is a frame-up' (21/5). *The Times* suggests that 'Mr Sarwar's allies have claimed that, as Britain's first Muslim MP, he is a victim of 'Islamophobia'. By using his faith to shield him from scrutiny they risk fanning the prejudice they fear' rejecting any 'special treatment' that Sarwar may receive due to being Britain's only Muslim MP' (21/5; see also 19, 22/5; *The Mail*, 19/5, 17/12; *The Guardian*, 26/5, 13/6, 17/12). Only *The Guardian* acknowledges that some of the constituency's problems may be due to racism because Sarwar took on 'a white political establishment' (19/5: 5). However, a whole article, written in *The Guardian* (22/5), sets out to refute the 'claims of a vendetta by 'whites' against a millionaire Asian', a theory raised in the interests of balance but then refuted by all papers except *The Sun* which fails to raise the issue. The article focuses again on the criminal actions of Sarwar and the rivalry within the community (thus removing whites from the framework) which it relates to the 'types and methods' of politics in Pakistan. Written by an Asian it avoids any accusations of racism and even reverses the racism onto the Asian community; 'If a white man said vote for me because I am a white man there would be uproar. But it seems allowable for an Asian to say it'..

Institutionalised racism is rejected as an explanation, by removing the actions from the structural setting, the criminal activities of individuals and in this case collectivities are perceived as the problem. Another example of ethnic blame discourse (Romer et al, 1998) which accentuates the harmful effects for the in-group. This type of right-wing mitigation, engaging in positive self-representation with negative representation of the out-group, conceals power relations. The preferred solution is not then to change the political system so it is more accommodating to minorities but to take punitive action against them.

⁵² Whereas journalists assume minority groups are too sensitive to discrimination, research shows that they try to ignore it as much as possible (Essed, 1991).

Appealing for Tough Action

The superstructure of many of these articles is manipulated to organise attention to the actions of Labour and downplay Sarwar's denials.⁵³ The papers see it as a necessity that the Government should act quickly or otherwise become similarly associated with sleaze, as with the previous government. This represents an appeal for tough leadership. Reminders are offered on Blair's 'vow to clean up politics' (*The Sun*, 19/5; *Guardian*, 20, 22, 26/5). An issue of Government (or even the British political system) credibility, all papers focus on this issue, their modality clearly expressed through the voice of authority; 'Crack the whip. Labour should show leadership in the Sarwar case' (*The Times*, Commentary, 21/5); 'Labour's political opponents will be watching how decisively he acts, noting he accused John Major of dithering over sleaze cases' (*Observer*, 18/5; *The Sun*, 19/5). There is some mitigation by the supportive papers in the face of Government non-action in the initial stages, whereas *The Mail* mitigates for the previous Conservative government, alluding to the realities of governing. Labour is constructed as about to act, updates are constantly supplied, with Labour sources adding to this reality, 'Tony Blair will not be like John Major and act uncertainly, 'He will act positively, decisively and immediately' (*The Times*, 19/5; *Sun*, 19/5). By placing such a high emphasis on action, the absence of action (until 17 June) enables a negative response by the papers. The pressure for action is finally heeded when Sarwar is suspended from the Party. By this time he has been constructed as increasingly politically isolated, his actions can therefore be attributed to him and distanced from the Party.

Although this discourse is present in all papers, the main differences, apart from stylistic, are partisan. Whilst *The Sun* wholeheartedly mitigates for and supports the Government, *The Mail* is critical, illuminating the lack of support Sarwar has received. This political criterion does open up spaces for positive representations of Sarwar. However, in an attempt to discredit the Government, Sarwar is ultimately condemned. To achieve this, *The Mail* puts less distance between Labour and Sarwar, seeing the Affair as 'embarrassing' for the Government. Initially *The Guardian* talks of 'cautious support for Sarwar', not wanting to jump to conclusions but immediately distances him from the Party when there is an indication of guilt. It, in particular, focuses on tough action due to its role in revealing

⁵³ The low occurrence of government in the quantitative analysis of the topic of politics is due to the wider variety in stories examined but is also an indicator that the government shifts to a more central position in the article when action is seen to be required.

sleaze in the Conservative government. Labour is depicted as having worked hard to construct a political consensus around a presumably unattractive candidacy and Sarwar has let them down, 'bringing the Labour Party into disrepute'. Generally, the discourse of all papers is dominated by calls for 'tough action' but *The Guardian* and *The Sun* are more likely to accentuate and protect Labour's good reputation. In *The Times* this approach, which is particularly vigorous and demanding, functions as a test of Labour's ability to govern. It is therefore more likely to be critical.

One of these criticisms is of Labour's courting of the Muslim vote. This is seen as an opportunity to warn Labour against involving itself with these groups and to rid itself of troublemakers, 'purge (itself of) suspect councillors' (22/5). In the guise of 'Tough Action' on sleaze the paper addresses the Government (and builds a consensus) to 'Suspend Sarwar' as a solution to this problem. Through the construction of these articles whereby Muslims are criminal and corrupt, tough action to expel them from British systems seems the only feasible action. (This discourse also has politically affiliated motivations in advocating the removal of socialist influences from politics). Whilst the function of the discourse is left implicit, it is perhaps more evident in a *Times*' cartoon, 21/5. Free from the constraints of news reporting, it makes its ideology more explicit (Appendix k, Figure 2). It shows Tony Blair transforming himself into a Mullah so he can be 'Tough on sleaze' and 'The causes of sleaze'. Apart from implicating Muslims as these 'causes', this requires knowledge of pre-existing populist views relating to the 'Mullah', its imagery mainly associated with a caricature of the Iranian Ayatollah and the associated extremism and uncompromising position. The connotations of this are that Muslims misbehaving in this country should expect to be punished as they would in an Islamic state. This ignores Sarwar's origins and homogenises Muslims world-wide, essentially constructing Muslims as 'foreigners'. It is also a reference to the enemy within, the causes of trouble and the threat to British society as Muslims attempt to gain power. Blair will therefore be perceived as in allegiance with this enemy if he does not act. Tough leadership is required to deal with minorities and their crimes implying that if they are not controlled in the UK, they will become wild as their counterparts elsewhere.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ It has been argued elsewhere that the concept of sleaze has allowed the media to set boundaries on the activities of public officials (van Dijk, 1988b).

This construction is evident through an examination of the syntactic agents in the headlines (Table 4.9) and in the syntactical semantics of the articles (Table 4.10).

Table 4.9: Agency attribution in headlines.

	Subject to action %	Sarwar Actor %	Others %
<i>The Times</i>	60.8%	13%	26%
<i>The Guardian</i>	55.5%	33.3%	11.1%
<i>The Mail</i>	62.5%	25%	12.5%
<i>The Sun</i>	60%	40%	
Total	59.2%	25.9%	14.8%

These headlines are actor focal (and therefore clearly attributing agency). Labour is the semantic agent in 26% of articles, the police 5.5%. Other actors include Sarwar's aides and lawyer. This not only shows the level of coherence between articles and headlines but that Sarwar is mainly subject to the actions of others.

Table 4.10: Agency attribution in articles.

	Subject to action %	Sarwar Actor %
<i>The Times</i>	60.8%	17%
<i>The Guardian</i>	55.5%	33%
<i>The Mail</i>	62.5%	37.5%
<i>The Sun</i>	80%	20%
Total	61%	29.6%

An examination of the linguistic processes employed to this end shows Sarwar is subject to repressive action whilst engaged in defensive or negative actions. Many of the verbal and physical predicates associated with the main actors consist of legal terms which advances the criminalisation of Sarwar. Sarwar is therefore 'suspended', 'charged', 'disciplined', 'questioned', 'accused', 'faces', 'probed' for having 'overstepped the mark', acting in a way that is 'grossly detrimental to the party', 'behaviour unbecoming and totally inappropriate', having 'wrecked, destroyed, damaged' Labour's reputation, thus 'betraying' them and the constituents, and in return 'vows', 'to clear', 'fight', 'Save', 'sues', 'rejects'.

The news values of this story and its categorisation contrasts with the reporting of 'the systematic deselection' of ethnic minority councillors by Labour at the last election ('Fury at Labour's party whitewash', *The Observer*, 15/3/98, p. 19). Although this has resulted in Labour facing a 'high-profile court case' under the Race Relations Act, it was selected as a news item only once with no follow up as to the outcome, and was left

uncovered by the right-wing papers. This illustrates how the press works to promote political agendas in their attention to particular stories which can aid or force government action. Despite both candidates being Muslims, they are not identified as such. The lack of categorisation here is an example of the association of Muslims with particular 'appropriate' topics.

Counter discourse

Counter discourse occurs both in relation to Sarwar and minorities, mainly in *The Guardian*. Only in *The Guardian* is there any mention of any contribution Sarwar is making to the community (albeit only once) in helping his constituents. Regarding workers at the Govan Kvaerners shipyard he says, 'I am more concerned with representing the people of Govan and securing the jobs that are at threat than giving this type of story anytime' (20/5). *The Guardian* also details some possible explanations for the registration of late voters given to the Labour investigation excluded from other papers such as 'apathy among Urdu speaking recruits' and 'data which suggests that the turnout was statistically unexceptional' (5/6). However, this is followed by an article on the 7th which says 'members of the team were not convinced by the explanations they heard' and are therefore expecting to find Sarwar guilty of bringing the 'party into disrepute'.

In the interest of balance, all papers report on Sarwar's frequently uttered denial. However, the statement of denial exists in isolation without any exploration to Sarwar's perspective and, as we have seen, is often buried deep within the article or undermined by negative evidence and comment, for example 'But that was treated with derision by the Labour Party at Westminster, which now only wants him to announce his resignation', *The Guardian* (22/5). Indicators which suggest that Sarwar was framed (*The Mail*, 19/5) are undermined by the level of allegations. References to Sarwar's positive characteristics are undermined by derisory personal evaluations. However, there is some indecision as to whether his actions should be considered as political naiveté or stupidity rather than outright manipulation (*Guardian*, 21/5, 18/12; *The Times*, 22/5, 18/12). This does, however, continue to allude to a discourse of primitivism.

Sometimes, these positive constructions of Sarwar result in the negativisation of Islam. *The Guardian* refers to Sarwar's previous allegiance to socialism in Pakistan as an example of credibility, 'his political enthusiasm has deep roots'. However, this is described 'as an affront to Islam' (19/5). By implying that the two are in direct opposition to each

other and by praising Sarwar's socialist activity, *The Guardian* makes a directly negative judgement of Islam in terms of its own values. Another example of this is coverage of the incident where Sarwar 'rescued' some Glasgow girls 'from arranged marriages in Pakistan' (referred to in all papers who praise this 'positive action'). This is represented as an antiquated practice in the treatment of women (enforced culture) and another example of feuding in the Muslim community (*The Guardian*, 25/5; *The Times*, 19, 20/5). In this way, Sarwar is constructed as a moderate acting against extreme practices but has a negativising effect on the Muslim community.

The Guardian also highlights some minority issues including recognising the struggle for Asians to enter the political domain (but also raises questions regarding the means used to achieve this, 20/5). In its final article, *The Times* alludes to this by suggesting that Sarwar was a victim of Old Labour networks from which he was excluded (due to his ethnicity). It also attempts to differentiate between him and the Asian community, which is seen to have been let down by both Sarwar and Labour (Linklater, 18/12). Linklater suggests that Labour should not have allowed Sarwar to be constructed as 'the standard bearer for the Muslim community' when they knew there were problems. However, it is likely that this discourse has political expediency in its criticisms of Labour and its attempts to engage minorities in politics.

The most substantial examples of counter discourse occur as letters in *The Times*. Both are from Asians, one entitled 'Anti-Muslim Campaign' (Haseeb, 25/5) and the other from the Chairman of Overseas Pakistanis, Q. S. Annisuddin (23/5). Both are critical of the media coverage of Sarwar likening it to 'a trial by media' based on his status as a Muslim. Haseeb also criticises the lack of support from Labour. However, in the context of other *Times* articles, these reinforce its arguments with regard to 'crying discrimination' and criticisms of Labour for courting the Muslim vote.

A column appearing in *The Sun*, by Norman Tebbit, entitled 'Sarwar so good' takes a similar stance on 'innocent until proven guilty'. This also appears to have political (and economic) expediency, criticising *The Guardian's* treatment of the Neil Hamilton case before it came to trial. This is a technique papers use to boost their status in the eyes of the reader and feed their superiority having solidarity in their affiliation to a particular 'community of understanding' (Lacey and Longman, 1997).

There are, then, slippages in presentation. Articles differ in their degree of disparagement towards Sarwar, sometimes he is presented favourably in relation to other actors. However, these threads of counter discourse tend to be fleeting and in the context of the level of negative discourse, the global coherence of articles and their composition, works to undermine any spaces of positive representation. For example, Sarwar's determination to stay and fight his case is seen as dishonourable in the face of the evidence against him. This position is summarised by a *Times* Leader when it argues that, 'the good faith of some of his accusers is questionable. His protestations of innocence are vigorous and underlined by writ. However, as we have said before, it is the amount of allegations that seal his guilt from the papers point of view'. According to *The Times*, then, he should be 'suspended until cleared' (21/5). It appears then that positive statements work solely to give the appearance of balance and tolerance, the problem debated and the solution rationalised.

An examination of the minority press shows how this could be alternatively constructed. In *Q-News*, Labour is constructed as difficult and repressive, associated with underhanded negative behaviour whilst it is suggested that Sarwar has been subject to a witchhunt. His perspective forms the basis of these articles whilst pictures are more attractive, showing him smiling and engaged (Jan 1998, p. 3; Feb. 1998, p. 9).

Conclusion

By categorising this story as sleaze, Sarwar is linked to a wider political phenomenon, however, it is also constructed so he appears as an abomination in the Labour Party, upsetting social and political order. This construction, which personalises the criminal behaviour and thus removes it from the political structures, does occur with other actors. However, the racial angle in this coverage allows the behaviour to be explained on this basis. It therefore appears as ultimately different from other constructions of sleaze and has greater coherence with racialised stories. Although it should be remembered that the construction of this story does have political (attachment) grounds which partly results in Sarwar's negativisation. Whilst he is somewhat a victim of this, other examples of Labour 'sleaze' such as Geoffrey Robinson and Fiona Jones (April 98) at the time were not treated with such attention and derision. This story has particular news value in its mixture of political and racial elements.

Sarwar is initially given conditional acceptance based on presumptions about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Cultural value judgements are made in relation to 'unacceptable' practices and are given racial and religious origins, the minority group is then confirming its natural tendencies. The strong argumentation of the press works to build a consensus around Sarwar's culpability. Through the addition of multiple and specific details, the omission of supportive evidence, the syntactical organisation in the macrostructure and rhetorical language used in these articles, Sarwar is constructed negatively in accordance with prevailing stereotypes. Inherently different; primitive, conflictual and irrational, the antithesis of democracy, if removed from the system, its integrity will be restored.

Through his categorisation as a Muslim representative, his identity has been hijacked by a number of groups for ideological purposes. In this case his behaviour is transferred to all Muslims. Muslims' struggle for political recognition is therefore diminished by this coverage, given the visibility of the case, and has resulted in political shame, which further marginalises their chances of participation.

Location

The location of articles on British Islam reflects general news values as well as the news values of different papers. Political and stories including extreme violence or disruption, in this case Sarwar and fundamentalism, are more likely to appear on the front page or near the front whilst the other three subjects appear in an intermediate position. The importance of a paper's news values is illustrated by the only three front page articles on fundamentalism, which appear in different papers. *The Guardian's* is an article critical of immigration policies that criminalise genuine asylum seekers; in *The Times*, a small leader appears on the front page to draw attention to an article on page 2, 'Muslims blamed for bomb', about the bombing of the Arab newspaper in London. *The Mail's* article which covers the whole page and continues inside is concerned with an Iranian claiming political asylum after committing adultery, a result of its anti-immigration agenda.

The location of articles is also related to the stage of events. This is illustrated by coverage of Sarwar. As a breaking news story, it appears on the front page (p. 2 in *The Sun* where political stories are not considered to be commercially attractive). It stays near the front during initial coverage, until the end of May when it moves back to around page 7. To underline their importance, initially articles are more likely to cover over half of the page

from the top. As they become less important they are reduced to smaller articles, a couple of columns at the bottom of the page. The story then jumps back to the front following significant developments such as the suspension and charges.

The size and location of articles generally reflects the attention given to the story in terms of coverage. It is apparent though, that stories that are more controversial (and disagreeable) to individual papers will be larger. This was apparent in the sensational coverage of Sarah Cook in *The Mail* where articles were larger, more detailed and visual than the broadsheets. Education, where articles tend to be smaller attains a greater significance in all papers when Muslims schools receive funding (see p. 230).

What is more interesting about the location of these articles is how they are situated in the composition of the paper. An examination of the classification of articles can often give an insight into the ideology of the paper. *The Mail* for example, groups articles displaying (Labour) government incompetence and in doing so affords its ideology greater impact. For example, its last article on Sarwar which concentrates on Labour sleaze, 'there is a growing frustration in the Labour high command over the string of sleaze rows that have dogged it for months' (17/12) appears alongside a report on sleaze allegations aimed at Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, providing evidence for its former statement (also see 21/5). *The Guardian* uses a similar technique to illustrate the difference between the two cases contrasting Labour's clear support for Robinson, 'PM defends Robinson' with the isolated figure of Sarwar (18/12).

Whilst articles about a general topic such as education or religion may be grouped together, this can have a negative effect when articles on Muslim issues appear as small appendices to larger articles on the Church or Church schools, transferring a message about importance (*Guardian*, 26/5; *Times*, 30/7). A more worrying pattern is apparent in *The Mail*, as appears on 30/7, where an article on British Muslims (blasphemy) is positioned alongside an item on asylum seekers in France effectively categorising minorities with foreigners.

Sources

van Dijk (1983) has argued that the production of news is 'the reconstruction of available discourses' as journalists seldom witness events themselves. Selection of sources and actors chosen to speak clearly has an ideological basis but is also partly to do with

context. It is evident from this research that the press is reliant on official, particularly governmental discourses partly due to the political/institutional context where matters of law are involved (Table 4.11). This 'authority orientation' (Hansen and Murdock, 1985) has been widely recognised as giving credibility and authenticity to the arguments being propagated, resulting in 'official formulations' of events (Chibnall, 1981; Tuchman, 1978; Tunstall, 1971b). Given that these sources are often the 'primary definers' of a situation for the journalist, carrying with them as they do the 'common sense of (the) institutionalised status quo' (Fowler, 1991; Hall et al, 1978), this appearance of neutrality conceals the power differentials which inhibits change.

Table 4.11: Sources and actors by topic.

Cook		Education		Blasphemy		Fundamentalism	
Sources	Actors	Sources	Actors	Sources	Actors	Sources	Actors
Sarah Cook, British Gov.	Sarah Cook, British Gov.	Gov. reports, Schools, Gov.	Teachers Local councils, Councilors, Gov. officials,	Gov. The Runnymede Trust, Academics	Home Sec/Gov Academics CRE The Runnymede Trust, Lobby groups, Censorship groups. Muslim community	Home Office/ Gov. Police	Home Office/ Gov/ Home Sec.
Turkish Court, Turkish Press.	Turkish Court, Musa Komeagac		Muslim spokesmen, parents, children.			Egyptian Gov/ officials, dissidents	President Mubarak, Egyptian Gov officials, dissidents Arab newspaper

Although official sources and actors dominate, there is some evidence of spaces for alternative voices. *The Guardian* is better at representing the Muslim community. However, most of those Muslim sources/ actors are used to either articulate the dominant ideology in the article, as with this quote by President Mubarak on the possibility of dialogue with the extremists, 'What kind of dialogue? It will be a dialogue between the blind and deaf'. This is also achieved by the use of militant sources such as Omar Bakri Mohammad whose outpourings appear blatantly ideological and confirm arguments regarding extremists. Or, Muslim actors/sources are undermined by the structure of the article whereby credible white actors/sources have prominence. This is particularly apparent in an article on MI6 who 'blocked Sheikh's visit to Britain'. Whilst Sheikh Khalid Balala, exiled leader of the Kenyan Islamic opposition party, is forefronted, his allegations are framed with scepticism, his words surrounded by 'he claimed', 'claims that' and denials from the Home Office. His

character is discredited, 'The woman in the ticket office who had assured him he would not need a visa, was rebuked with such severity she burst into tears' (*The Guardian*, 12/1). More positive or balanced minority voices are likely to follow white official sources/actors initial definition of events.

With those topics brought into the public domain by Muslims, one may expect more Muslim voices. This is so but they are limited. Said argued that one of the characteristics of modern orientalism is that the subjects are not able to represent themselves (1978; Ahmed, 1992). This appears so, when credible mediators become necessary to speak on Muslims behalf (The Runnymede Trust, CRE, Sarwar's lawyer) (van Dijk, 1991). The situation is particularly difficult when actors are categorised as criminals as with terrorists. The illegal status of terrorists allows government policy to set the terms of reporting by placing boundaries on interviewing in the 'public interest' (Officials Secrets Act, Prevention of Terrorism Act). Evidence based on research on the reporting of Northern Ireland shows an 'atmosphere of caution' whereby journalists are aware of what is appropriate and acceptable (Chibnall, 1977; Miller, 1994: 57; Schlesinger, 1987). However, in incidents of foreign terrorism, it is even more likely that the press will work in allegiance with the state based on ideological coherence, protecting democratic interests.

By criminalising the Muslim actors in these articles, their voices have no credibility, promoting sympathy for the groups who are seen to be protecting social order. The lack of Muslims in official positions reinforces an idea of their place in society. An examination of the Sarwar coverage shows this pattern in finer detail (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: Breakdown of recognisable sources, frequency of appearance.

	<i>Times</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Sun</i>	Total
Labour Party/MPs	7	14	5	1	27
Sarwar	1	2			3
Police	1	2			3
Court	2	1		1	4
Sarwar's supporters		2			2
Lawyer	1	2			3
<i>News of the World</i>	6	4	2	2	14

The Labour Party is by far the dominant source, followed by the *News of the World* and other official sources. Only a small space is given to Sarwar's aides and one of these

articles is actually an attack on Sarwar. Does this reliance on sources unsympathetic to Sarwar mean the articles reproduce their perspectives? This often depends on the main actors selected to put forward their point of view (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: Frequency of actors quoted in coverage of Sarwar case.

	<i>Times</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Sun</i>	Total
Labour Party: Official	6	5	5	1	17
Unofficial/unnamed	8	4	1		13
Other Party's MP's	6	4	1	1	12
Total politicians	20	13	7	2	42
Sarwar/spokesman	5	1	3		9
Police	2				2
Sarwar's supporters	1	4			5
Community members	1				1
<i>News of the World</i>	1				1
Other	2				2
Total:					
Official sources	25	13	7	2	47
Other	7	5	3	0	15

Note: These are only counted as actors where they are not sources, explaining why the *News of the World* has a low frequency (see Table 4.12). Sarwar is included as an unofficial source as his perspective is seen to be coming from outside the Party.

Three times as many official actors are quoted as unofficial. The majority of these are MP's critical of Sarwar. Unnamed Labour MP's are those involved in unofficial 'leaks' for the Government who is unable to condemn Sarwar unless he is found guilty. This also aids in what Said (1978: 129) called 'subjective restructure' whereby sources are used to speak for the paper whilst it continues to appear objective, in this case functioning as mitigation for the Government, reinforcing its policy of 'tough action' whilst it waits for further evidence before acting.

Sarwar's perspective is relatively marginalised although the allegations always encompass the term 'allegedly' to avoid any libel action. There are a few spaces for unofficial, community comment in *The Times*, which has a wider variety of actors although, as we have previously seen, these are often used to discredit Sarwar; 'My wife was away in

Pakistan at the time and her polling card was at home, but I discovered that her vote had been cast' (Aman Ul-Haq, *The Sunday Times*, 18/5). *The Guardian* allocates more space to Sarwar's perspective. *The Sun* and *The Mail* utilise the dominant official perspective. Actors and sources are therefore extremely limited and confined within a tight framework around institutional perspectives.

No specialist religious correspondents were used to cover any of these stories which can only contribute to the lack of understanding of the important and sensitive aspects (of religious psyche and sacred beliefs) involved (Table 4.14).

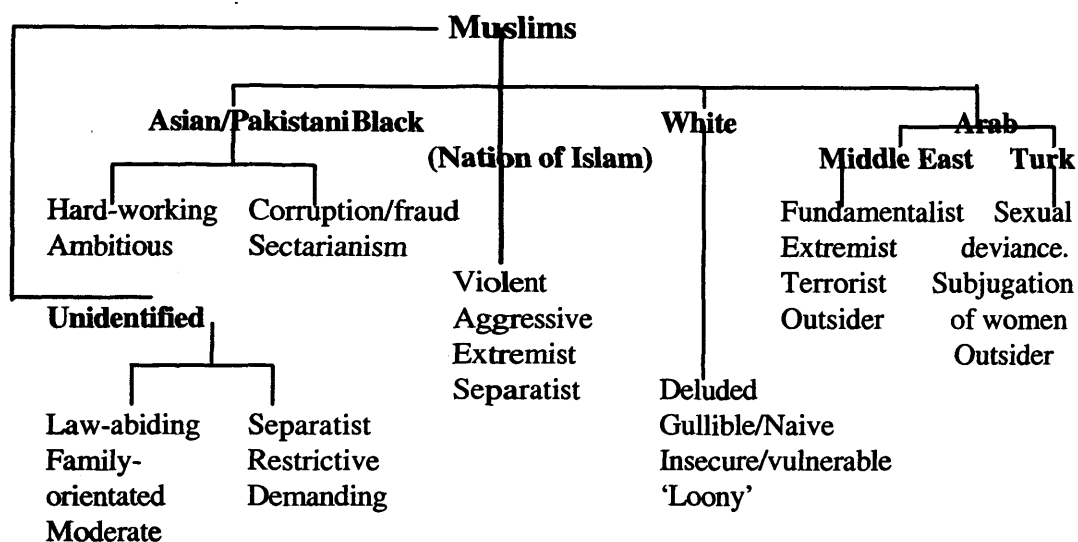
Table 4.14: Correspondents used to cover stories

Cook	Education	Blasphemy	Fundamentalism	Sarwar
Foreign	Education, Generalists.	Generalists, Social Affairs (<i>Mail</i>), Home Affairs (<i>Guardian</i>).	Middle East/ Foreign, Diplomatic Editor (<i>Guardian</i>).	Scotland Political

Nationality/Ethnicity

Whilst there is an overall tendency to homogenise Muslims, there is some differentiation in the discourse based on constructions of nationality. Most British Muslims have their origins in South Asia. These origins may not be attended to where stories involve collectivities or can not be implicated in behaviour (blasphemy and education). However, where personification and racialisation is feasible, there is a tendency to link behaviour to the stereotypical characteristics of an ethnic group. Whilst Muslims are criminalised, Muslims involved in crimes traditionally applied to black minority groups of a violent, physical nature such as mugging are not considered newsworthy. By applying these racialised discourses, Muslim identity is bound up with ethnic identity and stories are selected which show groups acting 'true' to their 'nature'. Shifts in representation also occur with political agendas, sleaze and fundamentalism being more topical than mugging. Figure 4.1 shows a simplified diagram of ideological groupings of Muslims in the press based on apparent national origins/ethnicity.

Figure 4.1: National/ethnic ideological groupings according to the British Press.



These could be differentiated further in terms of economic position, the poor or wealthy Pakistani, for example, or the differences between Iranian, Saudi, Egyptian, Middle Eastern dissidents. Arabs are constructed as having their citizenship outside the UK, with the result that British citizens with origins in the Middle East are barely visible in the press (as found by Yuval-Davis and Silverman, 1998).

However, despite these ethnic and national divisions, the results show an intersection of discourses relating to Muslim identity. Table 4.15 (p. 227) shows how this occurs in relation to the topics analysed here (and the ethnic divisions incorporated within them) and identifies the discourse most prevalent in the reporting of British Islam.

This Table clearly shows the different treatment of events according to the degree of foreign element within them. Where a topic constitutes an entirely British focus, it contains a discourse of nation and identity, whereas those topics with a foreign element rely more heavily on an Orientalist discourse closer to that described in the literature. However, this clearly shows the evaluation of Muslims in terms of primitivism, deviance, disruption, irrationality and intransigence yet perfidious.

Table 4.15: Most prevalent discourses in the reporting of British Islam

Relationships	Education	Blasphemy	Fundamentalism	Sarwar
Orientalism			**	*
Sexuality				*
Primitivism				→
Gender	*			*
Generation				
Criminality/ Illegality	*	*	**	**
Irrationality				→
Immorality				
Naiveté			*	**
Foreign element			**	**
Homogeneity				→
Restriction			→	
Manipulation			**	**
Threat to values				→
Insincerity				→
Nation				→
History		**		
Loyalty				→
Multiculturalism		**		
Participation		**		**
Separatism		**		
Economy				→
Absolutism			→	
Anti anti-racism		**		**
Identity		**		**
			Physical threat	
				Sectarianism

Key.

The discourse runs through each topic →

A large part of the discourse on this topic **

An element in the discourse of this topic *

Coverage in *The Sun*

Apart from the stylistic differences in *The Sun*, it also shows little interest in minority issues, coverage being minimal (only 29 articles including international coverage). There is some parity with the news values of other papers, particularly with regards to foreign news where its Oriental discourse emphasises the aggressive, authoritarian nature of Islam with allusions to the sexuality of the Arab. The headlines are actor focal, making transivity clear, for example, 'Muslim fanatics butcher 30 Algerians' (27/8). Those stories given more space are about relationships, Princess Diana having particular commercial value for the tabloids, and sex, 'Saudi Prince obsessed with Brigitte Nielsen' (24/6). Only the Saudi nurses reach

the front page. Topics covered, shown in Table 4.16, illustrates *The Sun*'s populist rather than strategic discourse, the lack of coverage of fundamentalism in the UK being evidence of this (Halliday, 1996).

Table 4.16: Topics covered in *The Sun*, 1997

	International news	Domestic coverage
January	Saudi Nurses (3 articles). Islamic punishment in Chechnya	
March		Mother 'furious' at Muslim tattoo on son (painted on at school)
April	Muslims die in pilgrimage fires	Eubank in Muslim dress. Speculation over Princess Diana's relationship with heart surgeon, Hasnet Khan.* John Major visits mosque.
May	Muslim women fight to cover face on ID cards, France.	Sarwar (4 articles)
June	Saudi Prince obsessed with Brigitte Nielsen (actress).	'Allah' written in 'Holy Tomato' (2 articles). Education (2 articles)
August	Muslim 'fanatics butcher' 30 Algerians.	Relationship between Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed suggesting conversion.
September	Saudi Nurses (7 articles)	
December		Sarwar
Total Articles	15	14

* Not identified as a Muslim.

Coverage of British Islam is mainly included for its entertainment value and comical effect which trivialises the beliefs of Muslims through ridicule. Lacey and Longman (1997) in their analysis of *The Sun*'s coverage of environmentalism found that its major tool in building 'a culture of (mis) understanding is humour'. They suggest the humour and lack of interest encourages a culture of avoidance, relieving the individual of any responsibility for understanding any problems faced by society. The number of puns used in the (limited) text illustrates this; Eubank is set to 'Mecca an impression' and is making a 'handsome Prophet'; for John Major, it is 'Mosque the merrier'. The composition and structure of articles directs the reader to the absurdity of Muslim belief and behaviour. This is demonstrated by the articles on the 'Holy Tomato'. The headline, 'Muslims queue for a glimpse of amazing 'writing'', the inverted commas juxtaposed against a photograph of the unimpressive 'writing', 'which we have highlighted', that 'Hundreds of Muslims are flocking' to see. These strategies of derision of a (homogenous) group of people encourages a general disrespect for them and their values.

Serious articles function to reinforce this and highlight Muslims' attempts to impose their beliefs on 'us' and provoke opposition to change. This is illustrated by 'fury at Muslim tattoo' where the grievance of the white parent is attended to with no attempt at balance. In these articles, a strategic pattern has developed which attempts to defend Britain as a Christian country and ensure positive presentation of the in-group. The boy's mother is quoted as saying 'I'm not racist *but* Steven is a Christian'.

The only other articles involving Muslims, but not categorised as such, are about curry houses which have been incorporated into popular British culture and cases of discrimination which are anti-Asian. Although the discourse relating to Muslims reflects that of other papers, it is more closed and delivered through humour. Despite the lack of coverage, the uniformity in the treatment of Muslims results in a consistently clear message based on an exclusive agenda that denies Muslims any rights, excludes their voices and perspectives, and champions the rights of the white majority. Given the readership of *The Sun*, more people receive this message than any other.⁵⁵

Post Analysis Update

A continued daily monitoring of the papers used in the qualitative analysis confirms the persistency of the unified framework of representation. The same topics dominate coverage in 1998, with new events giving expression to the same repetitive ideology.

Relationships

Ongoing incidental articles on relationships focus on the problem of cultural differences and repressive practices towards women. The dominant ideology is apparent in intermittent coverage of the relationship of the Khans when any visits by Jemima to London alone, are interpreted as evidence of 'tension' in the marriage. This was evident in October 1998, when rumours regarding a visit were quickly defined as a 'crisis' by *The Mail*, which immediately defined the problem in its leader as 'Culture clash starts love rift for the Golden couple' (19/10). This angle is emphasised throughout its coverage, 3 news reports, and 2 editorials, functioning as confirmation of the inevitable breakdown of the marriage on this basis. It is covered to a lesser extent in the broadsheets, both include one news item and one commentary. *The Times* takes the same angle as *The Mail*, reporting rumour as fact. *The*

⁵⁵ It has also been argued that *The Sun*'s use of language, its syntactical simplicity and colloquial registers, illustrated here, is normatively appropriate for the target group, and heightens their understanding of the (*Sun*'s) message and its recall (van Dijk, 1983).

Observer, however, whilst critical of the commentators predicting the end of the marriage, also focuses on the numerous problems the couple have to which it inevitably concludes 'they (critics) may also have a point' (18/10).

Education

Coverage of education continued in 1998 as two Muslim schools were awarded state-funding in January. This was reported in one news item by each newspaper (covering half to 3/4 of a page, except for *The Sun* which accords the issue less space with one extremely short article). *The Guardian* covered it most extensively with two additional commentaries and three letters. Coverage of this event was more balanced. *The Guardian* showed particular support with its discourse of equality, inclusivity, rights, identity and integration. A commentary by Roy Hattersley grounded the problems in the fears of the majority, a discourse rare in even *Guardian* coverage. Balance is created by the inclusion of a supportive letter and comment, and a critical comment and two letters. Criticism in *The Guardian* mainly concentrates on the negative consequences of separatism. Coverage in the other papers is more muted, cautious, tantamount to conditional acceptance. Whilst reassuring the reader that the Government will ensure these schools do meet the required standards and enforce equal opportunities, they introduce negative aspects, raising fears with regard to the promotion of extremism and separatism, the cost to the taxpayer, and the degree of equality, standards and stringent punishments in the schools. *The Times* is the only paper to introduce the Church's response, and other Christian's, Rev. David Streater emphasising the need to maintain and defend Britain's Christianity. The Muslim girl is continued to be utilised by the broadsheets as a visible signifier of Islam, whilst the tabloids prefer official figures.⁵⁶

Response to this policy and coverage has been mixed, from jubilation to cynicism, that it is only a token gesture meant to appease the community. The situation is presented as a 'battle' in all papers except *The Guardian*, with two homogenous, opposing sides, hence the variety of responses within the Muslim community are not expressed. However, coverage, on this occasion, is better than previously and could represent a shift which is yet to be borne out. Ibrahim Hewitt, Development Officer of the Association of Muslim

⁵⁶ It is my contention that the national press prefers to use girls wearing as near to the full black chador as possible apart from in circumstances previously alluded to, in contrast to the Muslim press which shows women in a wider variety of dress but the material analysed here does not provide sufficient evidence for this and requires further investigation.

schools, in a letter to myself, suggested that this was partly due to 'better' relationships with journalists which have developed over the years (6/3/98). Increased Muslim activity in 1998 saw campaigning concentrated around this issue. Groups unified to establish themselves as a credible lobbying group, acceptable to the Government for negotiation. Through a process of attrition, the shelving of this issue could no longer be justified in what is deemed to be a democratic, multicultural country.⁵⁷ This discourse, alongside more cautious and anti-change discourse also enters press coverage.

This 'balance' is more evident in both *The Times* and *The Mail* this year. *The Times* has a total of five articles throughout the year, this includes a letter supporting Islamic schools, also from a member of the Clergy (19/1). *The Mail* includes four articles, two of which are fairly supportive and only one outrightly negative. Both papers cover the first day of the Islamia school's official grant-maintained status, stressing its inclusivity and commitment (not covered by *The Guardian*) (21/4). However, in between these positive articles, old themes prevail. In March, a *Times* article criticises 'the privatisation of religion', which it perceives separate religious schools to be a result of and its last article in this year reports on the standards of a private Muslim school and its 'narrow curriculum' (26/4). Subsequent coverage in *The Mail* and *Guardian*, also in April, is more negative. *The Mail* reports on Scotland's first private school for Muslims, highlighting the negative effects for race relations (24/4). *The Guardian* reports on two council schools in Liverpool that are being closed to introduce one new school which will 'stress the ethos of Islam' (29/4). This underlines the grievances of white parents and the insubstantial percentages of Muslim pupils relative to their white counterparts.

What is largely omitted from coverage is discussion on the contribution these schools can make to the majority, rather than just their own community. As Muslim-led rather than Muslim-only schools, others can benefit from their specific cultural and moral approach as many non-Christians benefit from church schools. In this year, reports which showed boys were falling behind girls educationally led to a discussion about the benefits of single-sex schooling. This policy is only denigrated in relation to Muslim schools.

From subsequent coverage and these sort of omissions, it must be concluded that by allowing Muslims two state funded schools and press coverage of this is a way of managing

⁵⁷ Equality in education has more general widespread acceptance (if only on the surface) than in other areas which is borne out in the quantitative findings (see p. 151-2).

the community. This is evident in *The Mail*'s only commentary, which concedes to the funding of Muslim schools as 'an act of fairness' providing they are tightly monitored by the state (10/1). This acknowledgement not only avoids imminent confrontation but also having to implement further and more controversial legislation such as that on religious discrimination.

Religious discrimination

Only fleeting reference is again made to the subject of religious discrimination. This occurs as a result of discussions between Jack Straw and Muslim groups to amend the Crime and Disorder Bill to incorporate religion to aggravated crime, only in *The Mail*. Its news report and letter functions to discredit the idea of 'Islamic prejudice', prejudice against Islam, and suggests it is 'we' who should be affronted by the extremism of Islam, mobilising support against the change (23/6/98, p. 17). The introduction of a Private Member's Bill by Labour MP, John Austin, seeking to criminalise religious discrimination is not reported on, 3/3/98.

However, Rushdie once again becomes a story of significance when negotiations between the British and Iranian governments leads to the withdrawal of support for the fatwa by Iran (September 1998). This is covered in some depth by all papers, particularly by *The Guardian* (22 articles in total) who is first to break the story. Its articles are larger and nearer the front of the paper, three appearing on the front page. *The Guardian/The Observer* categorically supports Rushdie (and the Government, here), seeing itself as part of the Rushdie campaign. Initial coverage constructs Rushdie as a faultless victim of others intolerance. He is the 'oppressed' and is attributed with numerous positive predicates, 'courageous', 'brave', 'survivor', 'generous' etc. Constructed as an issue of freedom of speech and upholding democratic rights, the paper's rhetoric is more extreme than the other papers as it establishes two homogenous polarised groups. Rushdie stands for all that is good in liberal society; freedom, creativity, intellect, rationalism. Muslims are therefore constructed (and referred to) as inferior, immoral, rigid, restrictive, intolerant, misogynist, fanatical, manipulative, brutal and threatening.⁵⁸ Initially celebratory about Rushdie's (and as such 'our') 'triumph', articles become sceptical about 'the deal', introducing the concept of a 'freelance fanatic'. The use of extreme sources and Islamic 'scholars' and 'experts' to

⁵⁸ Although, the threat in the UK is dismissed as Muslims are described as 'tinpot' (25/9), a recurrent practice in *The Guardian*.

confirm that the fatwa is 'irrevocable' and it is 'the duty of all Muslims of the world to carry it out' transfers this label to all (also *The Mail*, 29/9). Scepticism is also based on the instability of politics in Iran whereby hard-liners refuse to back down, using Rushdie as a symbol of their cause (and as such is a victim of their power struggle). After reporting several indicators, their scepticism is confirmed when 'Radicals set new Rushdie bounty' (12/11). Stories confirming Muslim unity around the world on this issue continue to filter through sporadically, as with Indian Muslims' opposition to Rushdie's application for a visa, (2/99).

The Times (9 articles) and *The Mail* (7 articles), although supportive of Rushdie, distance themselves as outside his 'circle of friends and apologists' (*The Mail*, 27/9). Although again supporting the issue the Affair stands for, they make less of it, preferring to highlight the political expediency on both sides (and are therefore less supportive of the British government). Their scepticism towards 'the deal' is immediate, particularly in *The Mail* where coverage throughout is transformed on this basis, each article working to cement this argument. Its first headline being 'Rushdie still faces death threat' (24/9) and its last, 'Bounty on Rushdie increased' (13/10). Although often negating the threads of counter discourse these papers introduce, they nevertheless allude to possible alternative perspectives which barely enter the extensive but repetitive and closed discourse of *The Guardian* (see letters 26/9). This includes questioning Rushdie's character, the cost of protecting him, suggesting that blasphemy is offensive, that liberals are hypocritical in their support for him, and attacking the Government's climbdown (for compromising with Iran). Generally, however, although less attention is given to the issue and the response is more muted, the same discourse and strategies are resurrected. All papers use extreme Muslim sources, feature his conversion to Islam as a 'mistake', a result of being at a 'low-ebb' (*The Times*, 26/9: 7) and as well as picturing Muslims burning books, visually, Rushdie is situated against a wider backdrop as opposed to the dark background against which he is usually set (the prison from which he has emerged). An issue deemed to have been caused by a 'clash of civilisations' (*The Guardian*, 26/9: 9), this allows *The Mail* to suggest that the release of Rushdie is a high price to be paid if, in backing Iran, we are subject to the terrorism of the Taliban (27/9). Islam is thus restored as the propagator of international terrorism.

Fundamentalism

By far, the greatest attention given to British Muslims in coverage in 1998 was on the subject of fundamentalism. This was largely due to the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the subsequent American air strikes on the 'terrorist enclaves' of Afghanistan and Sudan. Chiefly aimed at the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden who has been constructed as 'the world's top terrorist', the issue was personified through his demonisation in a similar manner to Saddam Hussein. Receiving extensive coverage which dominated the front pages of the press throughout August and into September, this international event provoked articles detailing British Muslims reaction to the bombings and the possibility of London becoming a target for 'revenge attacks'.⁵⁹ The main press source for the Muslim response was the extremist Omar Bakri Mohammad who was quoted as 'applauding the bombing of the US embassies', a 'terror supporter', 'fully behind Bin Laden' (*The Times*, 24/8/98). Following the US air raids, British Muslims were shown protesting in London and a variety of British Muslim opinion was sought which confirmed their 'fury'. The uniformity with previous coverage of this topic means it is not necessary to repeat the discourse employed in coverage here. However, in this instance, in the event's extremism, the Muslim threat is taken seriously, with Muslims overtly categorised as 'fundamentalists'. The climate of fear promoted functioned to prepare the public for the anti-terrorism legislation which was rushed through Parliament in early September. The Criminal Justice (Conspiracy and Terrorism) Act has given police extended powers and made it an offence for groups residing in the UK to plot and fund terrorism abroad.⁶⁰ The strength of the discourse surrounding Osama bin Laden, means that by linking him to virtually every incidence of Islamic terrorism since, the international threat is maintained. This operates as a justification for repressive acts against Muslims.

Additional coverage of the threat or curtailing of 'Islamic terrorist' activity in the UK includes; the banning of an Egyptian group linked to the Luxor massacre from entering Great Britain, March; the arrest of eight members of an Algerian group suspected of

⁵⁹ This 'translocation' of the news event by reporting British Muslims reactions to it makes assumptions about their connection to it (Golding and Elliot, 1979: 156). These connections have not similarly been made between British Muslims and Muslims in Kosova, despite their many fund and awareness raising activities in the UK.

⁶⁰ The speed and lack of attention to definitions of terrorism contrasts sharply with the stalling on religious discrimination legislation (see *Q.News*, 1/9/98; *Muslim News*, 25/9/98).

plotting to attack the World cup, May; the arrest of seven men linked to Bin Laden and Luxor, September. In February 1999, articles re-emerged suggesting Bin Laden was planning another 'terror mission' to London. This culminated in his association with Saddam Hussein which *The Guardian* proclaimed to be 'The Western nightmare: Saddam and Bin Laden against the world' (6/2/99).

Both international and domestic coverage has created an illusion of a world-wide Islamic terrorist network as articles from countries across the world depict Muslim groups protesting against the US and Britain and raising funds for terrorism abroad. By making complex connections, British dissidents with terrorists such as bin Laden, who is linked to Bakri who is then linked to al-Masari, and then to the Muslim community as 'one of many among the hundreds of Muslims groups that have proliferated in Britain in the past few years' (*The Guardian*, 25/8/98), Muslims are therefore homogenised as being united in their goals and sympathies which directly oppose Western interests. Even the Govan MP, Sarwar appears, described as 'Banned' by *The Times*, reported as intending to visit Sudan and strongly critical of US actions (24/9). The culmination of the reporting of this topic, in this analysis, comes with a story which erupted in January 1999 which serves to confirm and condemn British Muslims' role as international terrorists. This was the capture of five British Muslims from Birmingham in the Yemen for plotting to bomb the city of Aden. Constructed as ordinary Muslims with the support of the Muslim community, they were quickly linked to a fundamentalist cleric in London, Abu Hamza, who is severely demonised, linked to Bin Laden and accused of plotting to overthrow the Yemeni government from London. Hamza is then linked to Abu Hassan in Yemen, on trial for the shooting of foreign (including British) tourists kidnapped in Yemen earlier on in the year.⁶¹ These associations render any member of the Muslim community guilty of such acts. The lack of support from the Foreign Office, in contrast to the Saudi nurses, adds to their guilt which is confirmed by a confession from one member of the 'gang' on the 14th February and the subsequent guilty verdict, August, 1999 (although the press is disparaging of the Yemeni authorities with allegations of torture and brutality).

I have not made any attempt to differentiate between papers here due to the ideological closure on this topic. It is evident that the patterns identified elsewhere are repeated here, with the broadsheets having greater coverage than the tabloids. *The*

⁶¹ It has since emerged that this event was a direct result of the arrest of the British Muslims.

Guardian has more elements of counter discourse in the form of letters and commentary, *The Times* and *The Mail* have few alternative perspectives. *The Mail* in particular, demonises Muslims and Islam and focuses on the consequences for Britain. *The Sun* again takes only fleeting interest, preferring to dwell on the sex scandal that may have provoked the air raids (Clinton and Lewinsky). I would argue that this incident has tightened the framework of reporting on Muslims further. The repercussions of such coverage, decreasing sympathy, worsening attitudes can only contribute to the further marginalisation of British Muslims.

Mohammed Sarwar

Coverage of Mohammed Sarwar continued as his trial commenced at the High Court, Edinburgh, 27/1/99, which lasted for nine weeks. There was some initial coverage of the trial (all news articles), four articles each in *The Times* and *Guardian*, only one in *The Mail*. These articles formulate the story in the same way as previous coverage; categorising Sarwar as 'the first British Muslim MP' and 'a multi-millionaire'. The evidence against him, the amount and seriousness of it is emphasised as top-level information with *The Guardian* affording particular discursive attention to this, its articles being slightly more detailed.⁶² However, most of this coverage is confined to small, marginal articles which lack the detail of previous coverage whilst showing the same tendencies. This is also evident in terms of selective reporting; they fail to report Sarwar's libel action against *The News of the World*, (5/98).

Following this initial coverage which highlights the evidence of the prosecution, there is a gap in reporting of a month until on the 9th and 11th March, when Sarwar is cleared of two charges. These articles appear only in *The Times* and *Guardian*, (with previous categorisation dropped in *The Times*), the first charge being reported in the 'News in brief' sections and the second on a similarly small scale.

Coverage takes a different turn following Sarwar's acquittal on all charges, 25/3/99. All papers cover this, *The Times* and *The Guardian* affording a whole page of analysis (*The Times* including three articles within this and a front page report). *The Mail* and *Sun*, whilst featuring his acquittal, do so on an extremely small scale, affording only a couple of paragraphs to relay basic details, on page 29 in *The Mail* and 31 in *The Sun*. Their lack of

⁶² By elaborating the charges in such a way but not providing any history of the constituency, events are conceptualised as isolated cases of criminality.

interest is an indication of their ideological position on the story illustrated by *The Mail's* only article on the trial which features the evidence of Badar Islam suggesting Sarwar was fully aware of the circumstances of his actions, having 'joked about the election bribe' (4/2/99). Whilst the tabloids continue to categorise him in the same way, the broadsheets pay less discursive attention to this, shifting their construction of Sarwar. Evidence supporting him is highlighted and new information is introduced, for example that Sarwar had wished to call a press conference to proclaim his innocence but was disallowed by Labour. This was previously formulated as ignorance and guilt on his part. He is characterised positively as a 'pioneer MP' and 'characteristically optimistic' in the face of charges (*The Times*, 26/3/99). Photographs show him no longer po-faced, out of isolation, his head held high (Appendix k, Figure 4). At this stage, both papers concretise their conceptualisation of Sarwar as having been foolish rather than criminal. *The Guardian* draws stylistic attention to this, on which it concludes its analysis, 'Mohammed Sarwar has surrounded himself with all the wrong people. I think he knows this. He is not a bad man but he has made some silly mistakes' (26/3/99). Sarwar's contribution to events is further attended to by *The Times* and *The Sun* who include Sarwar's apology to Labour for misleading them on the circumstances of the loan.

Through this characterisation of Sarwar, and by attending to the rivalries in the Asian community, the papers, however, still locate the problem within the community. The background to the constituency is virtually ignored (and the white players involved in this) as the explanation preferred is 'jealousy' in the Asian community. Some of Sarwar's practices are seen as an 'affront to Islam' which has fuelled antagonism against him. This allows the incident where Sarwar 'rescued' two Asian girls from a forced marriage in Pakistan to be retold as an illustration of this. Whilst this works to separate Sarwar off as a moderate, slippages still ensue between Muslim and Asian identity. There is also some insinuation that the motive for these positive acts, judged by the papers, is political ambition. Whilst *The Times* pays more attention to these negative strands of discourse, it also displays a more balanced approach to both Sarwar's background, in providing new information, and alludes to the racial hatred he experienced on the 'hard road to the Commons' (26/3/99).⁶³

⁶³ A change in the Scottish correspondent in *The Times* may be one of the reasons for this new approach. It should also be noted that only the articles appearing in *The Times* and *The Guardian* on this day draw any significant attention to these positive strands of discourse (other coverage regarding his acquittal is

In terms of political criterion, *The Guardian* mitigates for Labour in suspending him whilst *The Times* says Labour is now 'compelled' to reinstate him. *The Mail's* position is illustrated in its headlines whereby Sarwar is a 'Labour MP' until cleared, when this is dropped. Labour's handling of Sarwar is in sharp contrast to that of Fiona Jones who was not suspended from the party yet found guilty of election fraud in March 1999, a division of treatment reflected in the press until Sarwar's acquittal.

Despite a more positive approach to Sarwar, then, following his acquittal, this situation is still seen to have been caused by the practices (both business and familial) of the Asian community for which he too is still partly to blame, 'he has always played the politics of the outsider' (*The Guardian*, 26/3/99). The significance of the coverage both before and after Sarwar's trial is highlighted by this quote from Colin Wallace, an ex-army press officer in Northern Ireland;

'the important thing is to get saturation coverage for your story as soon after the controversial event as possible. Once the papers have printed it the damage is done. Even when the facts come out, the original image is the one that sticks.' (Miller, 1994: 238).

It has since emerged that this news story was the result of a series of entrapments of public figures by *The News of the World* who paid £45,000 for the story yet this payment was not disclosed by the press who universally condemned Sarwar.⁶⁴ This was not the case when England rugby Captain, Lawrence Dallaglio, was similarly snared, an incident which provoked media debate into the paper's journalistic practices.

On the 30th March 1999, *The Guardian* carried (solely) a photograph of Sarwar juxtaposed against the background of the Houses of Parliament. This may be testament to a greater willingness to now accept him (now categorised as Labour or Glasgow Govan MP). However, it remains to be seen on what basis, or even if, attention will be awarded to the conduct of Sarwar's daily activities.

So let me summarise the main findings in this chapter:

- Event-led updates allow the original formulation of the story to be retold which solidifies the discursive interpretation of the newspaper, adding to its 'regime of truth'

marginal and understated). This is significant in comparison to the huge quantity of negative coverage which preceded his trial. Although coverage closes on this more positive presentation, the discourse previously disseminated with regard to 'Muslims' may already have had its effect.

⁶⁴ Revealed by 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald', ITV, 27/5/99, 10.00pm.

(Hall, 1992a). For stories where the context is solely British, an issue of equity for Muslims is invariably interpreted as them having a politically subversive agenda. Their desire for cultural autonomy is interpreted as separatist and disloyal.

- From an ethnocentric perspective, Muslims are considered to be problematic, their presence and behaviour creating difficulties for the majority population.

- Encodes a view of the world whereby Muslims are either passive, subject to the action of others or the proponents of negative actions. Their categorisation and construction, for example the criminalising of Musa, dissidents and Sarwar allows them to be subject to state intervention. The high propensity of government action implies that Muslims need to be managed, either as victims or troublemakers, and allows for the continuation of prejudicial practices. It therefore delineates, reproduces and concretises a natural hierarchy of power relations in society.

- Due to a context where racism is unacceptable, the press find other semantic strategies to discredit Muslims on the basis of flawed characteristics.

- However, in the relational structure of articles (both local and global), Muslim behaviour is inextricably linked to their religious identity and naturalised. This reduces Muslim behaviour to reliance on custom. By detailing ritual but not explaining it, Muslims are seen to depend on irrational beliefs rather than intellect. The association of religiosity and criminality makes what is constructed as religious absolutism appear fraudulent and therefore manipulative.

- An intellectual link is made between European culture, with its Enlightenment history, and its progressive forces of reason and civility which constructs Muslims as irrational and primitive.

- Although generally presented as homogenous, particularly within the context of one story, certain stereotypical features are highlighted depending on perceived ethnic origins. In the representation of Muslims, cultural racism is intertwined with colour racism but has its own specificities as identified in the discursive construction described here.

- There is greater ideological consensus in coverage, the further it is removed from the British context.

- The struggle for legitimacy by British Muslims is visible in the press as 'the struggle around the image' (Hall, 1997a: 257) but currently the dominant hegemony is being maintained. Struggles exist between elite conservative and liberal groups but there is a

convergence in the formulations of Muslims. Although the volume of coverage is greater in the liberal press, the readership of the conservative press is higher. Alternative perspectives rarely go unchallenged, are expressed irregularly, in the margins of the papers and especially in the unofficial form of letters. Commentary is generally used to promote a more populist perspective rather than criticism.

- Positive representation is limited to the admiration of values important in British culture.

- Muslims are denied the space to represent themselves. Although Muslim actors are quoted in the interest of balance, it is less often and they are often discredited by white actors. This illustrates the lack of power Muslims have to oppose dominant images.

- *The Guardian* has a greater interest in Muslim issues, is more likely to run stories first and displays an openness which gives voice to alternative representations. However, its anti religious and human rights stance means Islam is offensive to its liberal norms. It is therefore more critical of Muslims than other minorities, having a similar framework of interpretation to the other papers.

- The tabloids grant less space to the coverage of minority issues in general and offer closure in this coverage. Coverage reflects their populist appeal, for example in the focus on relationships. However, whilst *The Sun* deploys anger or ridicule to highlight the exotic, odd practices of Muslims in order to construct them as outsiders, *The Mail* adopts a more sinister approach to support its anti-immigration discourse.

- *The Times*, whilst having greater parity with *The Guardian* in terms of the extent of coverage and news values and has greater balance than the tabloids, has more discursive equivalence with *The Mail* but with a greater emphasis on the preservation of Christianity.

- The lexicalisation of topics relating to British Muslims are dominated or grounded by negative linguistic registers: conflict, illegality, corruption; cultural, racial, wealth and victimhood. Muslims are therefore attributed with these types of social experience.

- Representation also depends on the complex interaction of the political affiliations and interests of papers as well as news production processes. The mobilisation of religious identity, therefore, has particular political, ideological intentions which evoke specific discourses and outcomes. However, this is also situated within the 'multilayered construction of social relations' (linked to power) whereby variation and consensus in presentation also occurs due to 'the theorisation of difference across a range of levels' such

as gender, generation and class (Silverman and Yuval-Davis, 1998: 13; also see Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992).

Conclusion

Clearly, coverage of British Islam has greater diversity than its international counterpart. Slippages, ambivalences and contradictions do exist in a way that prevents a totalizing, homogeneous Islam. The discourse has multitudinal purposes depending on the variety of issues, priorities and loyalties of different sectors of the press which vary according to events. It is too simplistic to say the press is Islamophobic, a whole lot of other factors come into play in press reporting.⁶⁵ Whilst there is evidence of aversion towards Islam, and overall it is possible to say that coverage is negative, this is also as a result of journalistic practices and uncritical or conservative modes of thought rather than the malicious intention to discredit Muslims. If the defamation of Muslims was the primary objective, coverage, even of these topics, could be a lot more damning, negative stories in the local press are not picked up on (see BMMS for the wealth of stories published in the local press), *The Mail* mitigates for Sarwar etc. Coverage reproduces social and cultural prejudices based on a political, historical conjuncture, which its news values both reflect and help to construct by reproducing them. Ethnic groups, in general, are focused on their own representation and may sometimes overestimate how establishment groups are intent on working against them, even to conspiracy level. However, it is also recognised that practices of representation take place within a set of (unequal) power relations and even if poor representation is due to subconscious or 'naturalised ideologies', common usage normalises negative conceptualisations, resulting in the same, significant damaging effects on minority groups (see Halloran et al, 1995).

The conceptualisation of Islam, reported here, is consistent enough (with the quantitative findings also) to have a significant impact in creating ignorance with regard to Muslims living in the UK. Societal changes, the increasing cultural diversity of the UK, are threatening certainties in our perception of nation and national identity. To overcome these insecurities, the press emphasises inherent cultural differences and conflict in order to create symbolic boundaries which function to keep (illusory) categories of people stable and maintain power relations through the polarisation of groups (see Babcock, 1978 for a

⁶⁵ I dislike this term for its connotations that poor representation is always intentional.

parallel argument). Press coverage of British Islam represents a project intent on 'cultural closure' (Kristeva, 1982 in Hall, 1997b). By attempting to establish a common culture, the discourse, by perpetuating the belief that Muslims are wholly different, excludes them from this constructed 'Britishness'. It further attempts to limit their power in the public sphere by presenting problematic issues as resolved.

The lack of publicly responsible discourse has made recourse to law necessary for Muslims, yet this action is interpreted as intolerance of British majority values which renders them unsympathetic with other readers. For those who have gained access to public life, the negative and controversial is highlighted (Sarwar). The hijacking of these Muslim initiated events and redefinition of their meaning and therefore history, represents a desire to reassert control over the people. However, the force of change, the need to appear democratic and egalitarian has opened up spaces for the participation of Muslims. This struggle in public life is also represented in the press and although some Muslims are cynical about motivations for positive policy and presentation, as community appeasement, it represents a step in the right direction as shifts in the hegemonic order occur. Muslim groups are increasingly becoming a substantial lobbying force along the channels expected by liberal society although this remains at the level of assertive independence rather than a dialogue amongst equals. The press' reaction to these specifically British issues illustrates their difficulty with pluralism or in *The Guardian's* case of incorporating Muslims within it. However, these spaces of positive representation offer insights of what may be to come, as increasingly societal tensions challenge the dominance of liberal discourse.

At present, Muslims do appear out of all groups to be the current target for the projection of the 'bad self' in society (Gilman, 1985), responsible for the corrupting elements.⁶⁶ This is due to world events and the perceived separatism of Muslims which constitutes them as both a symbolic but also socio-economic threat. I have tried, in this account, to show that the argument cannot be that there is one real Islam against which press coverage is misrepresented. Rather, that press coverage reduces the rich variety of Muslim peoples lives in all their complexities to a few 'reductive categories' (Said, 1978) which have come to represent a fairly homogenous Islam to the British public. This identity

⁶⁶ For example, recent coverage of the Stephen Lawrence case which has introduced the phenomenon of 'institutionalised racism' into the media, in *The Guardian* has been overwhelmingly supportive. A three page analysis (23/2/99), however, saw the reporting of 'Islamic activist guilty of attack on constable' adjacent to it, reinforcing stereotypes of violent 'mob' behaviour (of Muslims).

appears to override other demographics in association with stereotypical topics (having a specific ideological function). According to Trew (1979: 142) once 'an image and set of terms is established (and) condensed into the phrase ('violence in the streets'), which provides a basic model which can be deployed again and again as the organising theme in a cumulative shaping of social perception.'

Although this analysis does not provide the full repertoire of imagery on British Islam (incorporating only a section of the press and therefore media), the evidence suggests there is considerable consistency in terms of the discourse routinely employed to understand British Muslims.

From text to audience

It is recognised that not only do images have differing degrees of impact but there exists a struggle over their meaning at reception level. Whilst a selective construction can inscribe a 'preferred reading' into a text, making it more difficult to derive alternative interpretations (van Dijk, 1991), these can only be inferred through people's interactions with the texts (Osgood, 1959; Hall, 1980). The next part of the research is aimed at measuring the degree of correspondence between press content and public conceptions of British Islam in order to examine how far this limited representation prevents understanding and results in divisiveness and ignorance.

Chapter 5:

Interpreting Islam.

Introduction

In this chapter I examine how social meanings of Islam are produced in the interaction of text and audience. Two key questions will be addressed:

1. How far do audiences share the discourse of the press?
2. What are the frameworks used to interpret Islam?

Firstly, all expressions made by the participants about Islam were used to analyse what is understood and known about Muslims, both in relation to the texts employed in this analysis and their more general knowledge. Following this, an analysis was made of *how* these participants came to their understandings through the readings of the texts specifically. If it is assumed that the images people have of Islam and Muslims ‘stem from the interplay of beliefs, desires and dispositions with both media and non-media experiences and these ‘mixes’ and the influences will vary’ (Halloran & Nightingale, 1982: 62), what are the factors involved which result in differential decodings? The ‘contact hypothesis’- that close contact amongst members of different groups undermines negative stereotypes through first hand experience of cultural diversity (Sigelman and Welch, 1993), is the main variable of analysis. The differentially situated reader groups have been organised on this basis, keeping other variables within the group as homogenous as possible. What, then, are the implications of the press coverage made evident here for non-Muslims, particularly for those who have little contact with Muslims? What are the implications for Muslims who may be drawn into a dialectical negotiation of identity? What are the consequences of this limited framework of representation? Does it matter? Before addressing these questions, I pay some attention to the demographics of the groups in order to provide the reader with an idea of how the groups are differentially situated.

Demographical Details¹

Gender

The gender of participants was relatively evenly split with slightly more females taking part, 55%. Whilst the Muslim group was exactly evenly split, the majority of non-

¹ For a tabulated breakdown see Appendix L.

Muslims with contact were male, 62%, and the majority of non-Muslims without contact were female, 81%.²

Religious affiliation

Affiliation to a variety of religions were reported in the groups although the majority of the participants could be said to be non-religious. Whilst 18 of the non-Muslims designated Christianity as their religion, this appears to be in name only as only one of these affirmed its importance to them. Eleven claimed to have no religion and three more to be Atheists. The Hindus and Sikhs claimed that their religion is of little importance except on occasion and as a point of duty to their parents. This is in sharp contrast to the Muslim participants, for whom religion is considered important to all.

Origins/Language

The majority of participants taking part from minority groups are Gujarati speaking, 76%. This includes 83% of Muslims and all Hindus. Seventy per cent of the Gujarati speaking Muslims originate from India, the remaining three Gujarati speakers are of African, Malawi, and mixed descent (African/ Indian). The remaining two Muslims, not originating from India, come from African descent. They gave their first languages as Katchi and English. The Hindus have mixed parentage of African/ Indian descent. Both of the Sikhs are Punjabi. The group also included one Catholic Philippine whose first language is English.

Media usage

The majority of the sample report reading a newspaper daily or regularly, 58%, compared to 34% who do not. This is highest amongst Muslims, 66% and fairly equal in the non-Muslim groups, those with contact, 57% and without, 56%.

The majority of participants also report an interest in the news, 63%, the largest category in each group although the non-Contact group are almost as likely to say 'sometimes interested'. The Contact group have the highest degree of interest at 71%. This is reflected in the greater awareness and knowledge of political issues by this group, only equalled by the Muslim males.

Source of news- is, for the majority, television, although this is significantly higher for the non-Contact group. However, they are also more likely (to claim) to seek their news from newspapers than the others. This does not correspond with their reported interest levels, however, it does not mean that their news intake is higher (see media usage) but

² To be known as the 'Contact' and 'non-Contact' groups hereafter.

when they do seek out news it will be from one of these sources. Robinson and Davis (1990) have previously found that people perceive that they get most of their news from TV when other sources are more influential. Few get their news from 'new media' sources. This shows the continuing relevance of traditional sources to young people in the UK today.

Newspaper choice- the local paper is the most popular choice with all groups, accounting for 39% of all readership, followed by *The Sun*. Participants are twice as likely to read a tabloid than a broadsheet paper and this is twice as likely to have a right-wing bias although 12% read *The Mirror* and *The Guardian* (83% of these are in the Contact group, the readership in this group is also more varied). The majority of the non-Contact group read tabloids, all but one with a right-wing bias.³ Muslims are most likely to read their local paper or *The Times* or *The Sun*. The majority of participants, 63%, say they read these papers because they are available at their parents house but also agree with this choice of paper.

These patterns of newspaper choice reflect or are reflected in the outlooks of the groups. The non-Contact group have less interest in the news, a more conservative outlook and are less politically aware. The Contact group have a liberal outlook. The Muslims' opinions (expressed here) seem to be less informed by this sort of allegiancy and more by religious belief.

There are few gender differences in answers to these questions amongst the non-Muslims. The differences between the outlooks of these groups appears not to be based on gender. However, there *is* a difference between the Muslim groups. The females are less likely to be interested in and do not use the media as regularly as the males who, on the whole, are more politically aware.

This information provides an idea of how these groups are socially situated in terms of the variables which were considered to be of interest in this research. Attending to these variables has allowed me to examine the interconnections between these forms of differentiation and the meanings generated here through the interaction of text and audience. All the material gathered from these groups was coded to these variables allowing for cross-reference searching with codes that have emerged out of the process of analysis.

³ This would account for their lack of political knowledge despite their claim that newspapers are a main source of news in the section above.

By, for example, searching the parent node 'Gender' by 'Reading' enables an examination of any differences between sexes in their adoption of the preferred meaning (and between groups as text is automatically organised in this way). A full analysis of the results can be found from p. 273.

Perceptions of Islam: Analysing Discourse

This section examines the discourse generated amongst the groups in response to the texts about Islam and Muslims and how far this matches press discourse. One of the advantages of carrying out analysis through NUD.IST is that it also provides quantitative information about one's data. The retrieval of data coded at specific nodes shows the quantity of text units coded there and allows one to identify the frequency of which the different groups discuss a subject. The tabular results should not solely be relied upon as evidence, as the text units (in this case sentences) may differ in size. The quantitative retrieval does not obviously account for this, providing information only on the quantity of text units. As with other quantitative data, nor does it reveal the way in which the topics were discussed. It should therefore be used in combination with qualitative analysis to illustrate and confirm findings.⁴ However, what it does provide is an indication of the time spent on and hence the importance of the topic to a group. Table 5.1 provides a reliable breakdown of the amount of discussion, positive and negative, on each topic by each group. It is evident that the amount of negative discourse clearly outweighs the positive. The negative statements made by Muslims dealt with how they thought they were perceived by majority groups and in the media. This negative perception has been found in previous research with minority groups and, as I have found here, their fears are realised in the perceptions of the majority (Gunter and Vinney, 1993; Sigelman and Tuch, 1997).

Although Muslims are similarly positioned by the texts to discuss similar topics, they are more likely to then reject these images and transcode their meanings into positive ones. They are proud of Islam's growth, values and tradition. Conversion and Islam's unified nature are awarded positive attributes whilst non-Muslims discuss these subjects in negative terms.

⁴ This process only provides reliable, accurate data if the coding is accurate and well-defined, and the coding-hierarchy is well organised, an important factor to be aware of when creating and coding documents.

Table 5.1: Discourse generated in relation to Islam and Muslims.

Figures represent the amount of text units (sentences) retrieved on each topic.

Percep- tions	Positive (total)	Negative (total)	Muslims		Contact		Non-Contact		Total text units.
			Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	
Women	6	87	5	51	1	24	0	12	93
Islamophob- ia	5	36	3	20	2	16	0	0	41
Segre- gation	10	59	3	6	2	29	5	24	69
Restric- tive	5	115	3	60	2	37	0	18	120
Homo- geneity	31	109	22	80	0	17	9	12	140
Conver- sion	28	63	19	42	0	18	9	3	91
Aggres- sion	3	113	3	55	0	51	0	7	116
Cultural Diffs	5	160	1	59	2	52	2	49	165
Wester- nised	22	4	11	2	6	2	5	0	26
Foreign	2	61	0	34	0	7	2	20	63
Threat	10	43	10	22	0	20	0	1	53
Primitive/ Tradition	90	102	90	29	0	62	0	11	192
The Other	2	40	0	0	0	0	2	40	42
Wealth	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
Poor	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
Accep- tance	6	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
Illegality	0	25	0	7	0	8	0	10	25
Other	0	13	0	0	0	13	0	0	13
Total	223	1054	87	445	21	321	34	228	1277

From this data, it appears that non-Muslims who have no contact with Muslims are more likely discuss Muslims positively than those with contact. This is partly due to their attempts to offer alternative solutions to action within the texts they disagree with, for example; separate schooling, or is based on their interpretation of the text on a different level of difference such as age. Some, for example, felt Sarah Cook's conversion was 'up to her' as they disliked the imposition of authority. They also saw the Westernisation of minorities as positive.

Non-Muslims who had contact with Muslims made more negative statements mainly because they had more knowledge available to them to comment on and due to their liberal positions. This is evidence that knowledge does not always produce positive values. They articulated concerns with Muslim aggression, the threat of Islam and its backwardness. The

Rushdie Affair was to them a poignant example of the threat to freedom of speech which is continuing in the attempts to introduce what are perceived as primitive laws (blasphemy). They were also more aware of Islamophobia. These were issues which the non-Contact group knew little about. Having little knowledge of Muslims, and being largely unable to differentiate between minority groups, their discourse was dominated by cultural differences and the alienness of the Other as well as the impact their presence has on the economy in the UK which they discussed in wider terms.

In particular, these texts provoked widespread concern about the treatment of women, segregation, the restrictive nature of Islam (slightly more for those with contact, again relating to the more conservative outlook of the non-Contact group) and cultural conflict. What is beginning to emerge here, in the non-Muslim groups, is not only patterns of understanding which reflect dominant meanings of Islam but discourse which has currency in different newspapers and amongst the social groups who consume them, strongly illustrating the reproduction and circulation of discourse in society. Not only this, but these are collective perceptions which constitute the groups as 'interpretive communities'. This will now be illustrated by attending in more detail to the topics discussed.

Women

As with most of the topics discussed here the Muslims tend to, firstly, articulate their perceptions of the dominant media image of Islam, followed by their interpretation of Islam:

'And they basically emphasise that Islam is oppressive and it oppresses women and they keep them in the house, nothing but housewife, no freedom, no freewill. So horrible.' (female Muslim)

'The only reason why Islam says that it is not OK, it's OK for them to work but Islam gives women protection and the Western people and the media don't seem to understand that and it projects a very bad image of Islam.' (female Muslim)

This dominant image is confirmed by the non-Muslim groups without any divergence of opinion. Women are **restricted** within the religion represented by their covering and the separation of the sexes. The liberation of Western women is juxtaposed

against a more primitive, backward society which results in an objectionable way of thinking that permits such cultural abuse:

1: 'he wanted her to stay in the house all day and not go out anywhere, that's what you said: second class, well done Anna': giggles.

I*: What do you mean by second class?

2: 'just really that they are not treated as equals which is a bit different from this culture here because it's starting to change a bit now.

Em, women are actually having the right to go out to work and it isn't really that case over there is it?' (male and females, non-Contact)⁵

*I=Interviewer.

1: 'well it shows that in Muslim countries, I mean, here he's getting accused of sex abuse, there he's probably not and that shows the difference in treatment. It shows, it's supposed to be, it's more traditionalist.

I suppose it's like it was here earlier but now we've got more liberated than they have.'

2: 'I mean it tells you in the article that he phoned up every five minutes to see where she was and he didn't let her go to the cinema and that so it shows that he's a bit more old fashioned, the old school sort of thing.' (males, Contact)

Islamophobia

Responses to the idea of Islamophobia introduced in the texts were cautious. In the Muslim groups about half of the participants professed to have heard of it and, although generally admitted its existence, were more inclined to give it an alternative label, illustrating their mostly careful use of language in these sessions as a way of mitigating any accusations of extremism, overreaction or hysteria:

'it is not so much Islamophobia but phobias in general, it's like every phobia. It's like when someone says something, it's just through ignorance and prejudice and things like that.' (Muslim male)

The non-Contact group could not respond to this subject, generally phased by its meaning, whilst the groups with contact reacted cautiously. In a similar vein to their responses to negative media coverage of Islam, they were willing to admit its existence whilst wondering as to whether it may be justified, a view which appears to be based on media coverage:

⁵ The numbers represent different speakers in a sequence of conversation.

'I think it is caused by things like The Salman Rushdie Affair, also the massacre in Egypt and Muslims are supposed to be involved, it makes you think, you know, why are they attacking non-Muslims?'

I: 'do you think people have got a reason to be Islamophobic then?'

'not exactly Islamophobic but if you speak out openly against it, I mean look at the Salman Rushdie case.' (male, Contact)

Segregation

The discussion regarding Muslims as being segregated from the rest of society emerged from the text on Muslim schools. For the Muslims, this was seen as overwhelmingly a positive move. For the non-Muslims, it represents a wider desire by Muslims to separate from the rest of British society, on the whole, a negative move. Whilst this view was expressed by both non-Muslim groups, the Contact group's support for the policy of integration was justified through a discourse of equality and tolerance; that to eliminate racism, assimilation into a British way of life is necessary:

'I believe it's a good thing that they are actually recognised as separate schools, recognised by the Government, er, for their religious beliefs but what I don't agree with is actually separating schools by religion, you know, Roman Catholic, C of E, Muslim, whatever, I don't agree. I believe if people are all together you are less likely to get, em, you know, violence between different races, religions.' (male, Contact)

'I think you should have schools where you have all the religions involved because keeping them segregated is going to make it worse not better.' (male, Contact)

The non-Contact group interpreted this solely as a negative move and utilised the single quote in the fairly positive *Guardian* text to represent this view:

'Ray Honeyford: 'will attract non-Muslim children and that means separating children not only by religion but by race.' (female, non-Contact)

Whilst both groups, as with press discourse, perceive Muslims as responsible for their own isolation, the non-Contact group reiterates right-wing discourse which suggests British children (excluding Muslims) are being disadvantaged by moves to aid minority groups. Their avocation of integration for racial harmony, here, appears to be just an

acceptable excuse for their anti-race stance whilst the claims of tolerance and support for equality from the Contact groups are strongly protested:

‘By doing this, the gap between Muslims and the British will be widening, bad race relations which lead to racism. And the Muslim children will be receiving a better education than British children.’ (female, non-Contact)

More generally, Muslims are considered to be a separatist group by non-Muslims:

1: ‘like towards other cultures, I personally think they are withdrawn from the other cultures like because..’

2: ‘well they stand in groups of just them, don't they, not with other people with them and not like other people with them that they grow up with.’ (females, non-Contact)

Restrictive

One of the main perceptions of Islam by non-Muslims is that it is restrictive. This is expressed by emphasising the strictness (in unreasonable terms) of the religion and its believers, and how this places restrictions on others particularly in relation to freedom of speech and women (blasphemy and Cook articles). Although expressed by both non-Muslim groups, it is held most strongly by the Contact group due to their liberal outlook. The Muslim groups again argued that this was a dominant media image of Islam and objected to it. This negative impression is mainly expressed by the non-Contact group through the Sarah Cook article who imply that, by converting, she missed out on a ‘normal’ teenagers life:

1: ‘She had everything to live for, but now has the responsibilities of a mother and is going to miss out on her own childhood.’

I: ‘What does that mean?’

1: ‘well nobody, when you have had the kind of life you have had here, wants to go to some foreign country and treated like a slave, do you?’

2: and having to walk round with that thing around her face, a ,a thingy...’
(female and male, non-Contact)

Again, the Contact groups try to reconcile their liberal beliefs of equality and fairness with beliefs about a religion which places restrictions on British people:

‘Personally, I think the proposed law is going too far, yes there should be equality and respect for religious beliefs, but a law which could

possibly put you in jail for blasphemy is wrong. The public should be taught to be tolerant not punished for their mistakes.’ (male, Contact)

This group reluctantly accept Islam as long as there are no personal consequences for the majority. Other words attributed to Islam as restrictive include: ‘dictating’, ‘consuming’, ‘over-the-top’, ‘over-protective’ and most of all ‘strict’. ‘Strict’ or ‘restrictive’ is used 17 times in the course of these groups, six times by the non-Contact group and nine by those with Contact. Both groups use it to emphasise ‘the nature’ of the religion but consider that this characteristic is probably diminishing amongst younger generations in the UK. The alternative interpretation by Muslims is illustrated by the perception of one female who suggests that it is the West (Britain) which is restrictive in interfering in the activities of other states (in relation to the Luxor article). However, to illustrate how the Muslims can be positioned by the texts; one female suggested that, although women should be protected in Islam, Musa was too strict.

The seemingly uncompromising nature of Islam in the eyes of the non-Muslims is illustrated most sharply by a lengthy exchange between a female Sikh and Muslim when she joined a Muslim group. This allowed beliefs to be revealed as they were challenged and defended (see quote on conversion which is just an extract from this exchange, p. 256).

Unity

This code was devised to incorporate references to Muslims at home and abroad. Given the apparent generalisations in the press which homogenise Muslims regardless of race and nationality, do the groups see Muslims as being undifferentiated and do they perceive the media as representing them in this way?

The Muslim groups were the most forthcoming about this issue and both males and females were united in their views. All felt that being a Muslim unites them:

‘We are all Muslims, when I went there (hajj)

it was like no matter, black, white, Chinese or whatever, I was a brother,
I was one of them, it’s nothing about nothing else, I was a Muslim and I
was part of the Muslim community that’s it.’ (male)

However, they recognise the differences between Muslims due to nationality and race:

‘You don’t realise that there are many different beliefs in Islam
and it is like really different in different countries.

It differs from England to India to Africa and Pakistan so it's like they can't say Islam is one thing. They have to show it.
That it's all different in different societies.' (female)

They are therefore critical of media images which represent them as predominantly fanatics in the Middle Eastern mode:

1: 'at present all I see in the media about Muslims is some geezer getting blown up in a bus or some geezer shouting somebody else or some women crying'

2: 'once you are a Muslim yeah, you are labelled as Muslim and everyone else is labelled as a Muslim and you are with them.

So, if you see a Muslim in the other part of the world doing something then you are a Muslims so, of course someone else is going to look at you in that way.' (males)

However, due to the distance and ignorance of Muslims abroad, these Muslims often accept the preferred meanings but wish to be disassociated from the images themselves:

'I think that some people do recognise that you can like categorise sometimes Muslims between the ones that negotiate first rather than take action and there is some who like just take action straight in to it like 'ah, you said this about Islam, I'm going to shoot you'. If you were like, it depends what country you are from, if you are like from England or nearby, if you are from a country that is going to negotiate and has got the proper laws and that, you are really, you will not go violently protesting or you might protest but that is all you are going to do.' (male)

Whilst the non-Muslims profess to recognise that Muslims are homogenised in the media, this is mainly based on speculation regarding media bias. Their discourse, however, reveals very little perceived differentiation between Muslims at all:

I: 'You think those people (extremists) exist in this country do you?'

1: 'oh yeah.'

2: 'I'm sure, well, they certainly do.' (general agreement).

I: 'in the majority or minority?'

2: 'that would be quite presumptuous of me to say but I'd say it was a pretty even split.' (male and female, Contact group)

'I mean if you see an Asian person wearing a short skirt you think about it, not meaning to, but you will do cos there's like loads of others around them all covered up and then you see somebody dressed all tarty with red lipstick and stuff, it will just make you think for a second.
You just presume that they are all the same don't you.' (female, non-Contact).

Any recognition of differences, as with press discourse, alludes to the mutability of the religion with negative insinuations:

'I mean it says in here that the father is following Muslim religion as well and like, I mean I don't know much about Muslim religion but I understand that it is pretty much open to interpretation based on what country you're in.' (female, Contact)

Conversion

Responses to conversions in the texts are positive by the Muslim groups, an indication of the contested nature of meaning amongst different groups:

- I: 'It does say that she still is a Muslim and her parents have converted,'
1: 'that shows something about Islam, about someone else becoming Muslim in the household yeah and people saying something about Islam in the household and thinking, there's something about this religion.'
2: 'and she's turned two people to become a Muslim and his family have become Muslim'
3: 'and this guy Mr. Cook, he's turned in to a Muslim as well.' (Muslim males)

However, the Muslims recognise the preferred meaning in the texts and how conversion is usually portrayed; mainly concerning elites or as a result of force, resulting in cultural oppression and featured as a means to sell more papers as a point of curiosity by non-Muslims:

- 1: 'when Jemima Goldsmith married Imran Khan that was in the papers as well/'⁶
2: 'yeah, they were saying that she had to wear a scarf/'
1: 'saying how she had to stay in the house/'
2: 'it's oppression like, just because people wear scarves in this country or people abide by Islam/'

⁶ / = Interruption.

- 1: 'I think people want to read about it, find out why they changed'
- 2: 'people think about Islam as oppressive and they wonder why do they go to it, that's what it is.' (males)

Non-Muslims' reactions to conversion are in accordance with Muslim expectations. This exchange shows how non-Muslims regard conversion as another uncompromising element within a forceful religion. It is compared unfavourably to what are considered more open religions:

- I: 'Do you remember when Imran khan got married?'
- 1: (Sikh) 'Now I thought it was all right but it would be hard for her to change from her lifestyle to being a Muslim and having to do everything that Muslim people do.
He could have compromised with her and not made her convert because if I married a Muslim guy or wanted to marry him, I wouldn't convert to his religion for him.'
- 2: (Muslim) 'then he won't marry you then would he?'
- 1: 'but I won't convert, I don't see why I have to make the compromise to convert to your religion when he could easily convert to mine.'
- 2: 'he can't convert'
- 3: (Muslim) 'he won't convert to//'
- 1: 'no, he won't convert because in our religion you don't have to convert to our religion but I wouldn't convert my religion to someone else's just to keep them happy.'
- 2: 'then that's up to them, your husband or whatever will get punishment for that then and it's your responsibility to bring your children up in the right way.'
- 1: 'no but if I converted to your religion would I be punished for converting to your religion and leaving mine/'
- 2: 'NO!'
- 1: 'Exactly, so if someone from yours converts to ours they'd start a new life then wouldn't they?'
- 2: 'someone from who?'
- 1: 'someone from your religion converted to ours'
- 2: 'they won't, they'd go straight to hell'
- 1: 'so how do you think we would start a new life then//'
- 2: 'because we believe that Islam is the truth//'
- 1: '(talking over 2's previous words) that is what I don't like, I can't believe in that, someone can convert to your religion but then

they can't convert to ours, no I don't believe in that, I can't believe in that.'

Generally, responses are of disbelief and possible reasons put down to an individual's insecurities. Conversion is therefore seen as a result of negative forces rather than positive change:

1: 'She changed her religion and moved to a foreign country at a young age?'

2: 'It's hard to believe that her parents went a long way with it and her Dad even changed his religion.'

3: 'I think the religion of the couple doesn't matter although I think it's strange that the parent's converted their religion.' (females, non-Contact)

The only positive response is again based on a sympathetic identification with Sarah as a teenager, the syntactics indicate an otherwise negative attitude:

'She changed her religion *but* it was her decision.' (female, non-Contact)

Aggression

This code includes all references to Muslims as aggressive including extremism and fundamentalist. A similar pattern prevails as for other images of Islam; for Muslims it is a dominant media image:

'if I look at the news now, I'll probably see

Muslims in Bosnia are doing this and fighting and all this.

It is saying to us Islam is oppression and Islam is fighting, nothing but fighting. There is no peace in it.' (female)

To counter this image, both males and females made statements to challenge the stereotype to their non-Muslim interviewer:

'Most Muslim people are really scared, you know as soon as something is you know, get really scared and back off.

We don't really get involved in fights, we usually run off.' (female)

However, media images that are remote from the Muslims physically and culturally can influence them even if the subject is Islam:

'he's protecting people who have killed other people like Britain has got loads of fugitives here and they are just protecting them even though they are killers.' (female)

Whilst these Muslims lack the knowledge to make judgements on Muslims in the Middle East so accept their existence, they are keen to exonerate Muslims to some extent:

‘it’s wrong but like, as I said, if the money is coming from somewhere else for the extremists, they may not be fully responsible for what they are doing. It could be whoever is sending the money and nobody knows whose sending the money, it could be a Muslim or non-Muslim. You can’t really accuse one person, there are so many people involved.’

They therefore disassociate Islam from these types of activity, qualifying the Islamic position:

‘yes, I think he’s right, he shouldn’t let, Britain shouldn’t let killers live here because it is not right. If somebody has killed someone, they should serve their time for what they’ve done. In Islam it says that as well. You shouldn’t kill no-one for no reason really.’

associate the behaviour with other factors:

‘they just make blunt points that every terrorist is to do with Islam and sometimes it is not. It’s just to do with personal views you know or feuds between people.’

and are cautious about criticising Muslims at all:

‘I can’t really say that they are wrong because I don’t know much about it, if we were to say something about our religion, that’s not right, cos we don’t really have the knowledge to say anything about it, I think we’d be saying something wrong.’

Being a Muslim, then, has clear implications for the responses made by Muslims to these texts, even where they have no information to reject the texts, they struggle to resist them solely on this basis. This point will be dealt with more fully in the readings section.

The responses of the non-Muslim groups differ in this instance. In general, the Contact group are aware of these media images and suggest they are probably marginal. It is based on their knowledge of news that the Contact group concede that images of fundamentalism are stereotypical:

‘the extremists are only a small percentage of each group but they are the ones that are more likely to get the publicity because of what they do.’ (male, Contact)

Yet, their discourse reveals the very reality of these images to them. Images of conflict and violence were harder to dispel when close to home, The Rushdie Affair and personal experiences of conflict in their school environment being examples of this. These groups again try to show fairness to other cultures by being tolerant but their lexical choices reveal a distaste for such activities:

‘I talk to a lot of Muslims and I say ‘Are you in favour of the Fatwa, killing people?’ and they say, ‘Well you think about some of the things he said about this religion, it’s not acceptable, basically’..’ (male, Contact)

The non-Contact group, however, had only a vague awareness of this type of coverage, regarding Muslims in the same way as other minorities, as foreigners rather than terrorists. This reflects both their lack of interest in this type of hard or foreign news and the type of newspaper they choose to read:

‘they are a violent group going about bombing stuff.
That’s all I know that they go about being violent and stuff.
Wasn’t that that bloke in America who did that bomb, he wasn’t part of that was he? Oklahoma.’ (female, non-Contact, talking about Muslim fundamentalism)

Incidences of aggression quoted by the groups included mainly wars, acts of fundamentalism, terrorism, extremism, acts of atrocities against human rights, killing and violence. Table 5.2 demonstrates the variation in the way the different groups articulated about Muslims and aggression. In both non-Muslim groups press terminology, in particular ‘fundamentalism’, was rarely replicated. However, this did nothing to dispel the image for the Contact groups.

Table 5.2: Text units retrieved from the Aggression code

Aggression	Muslims	Contact Group	Non-Contact
Representation of Aggression	39	7	1
Perception of Muslims	8	22	6

Cultural differences

All groups alluded to cultural differences between Muslims and the West as causing problems. However, whilst recognising that these exist, the Muslims were mainly concerned with how the media exaggerated and used these to raise prejudicial feelings against them, the non-Muslims used them as an illustration of the difficulties and the need for assimilation.

The Muslims were the most acutely aware of cultural issues, the Contact group reasonably aware but their knowledge, being fairly superficial, allowed them to be positioned by the texts despite showing some awareness of the text's role in doing this. The non-Contact groups lacked any cultural awareness and used what they saw as (abnormal) inherent cultural differences as creating problems for the average Briton.

For Muslims, The Rushdie Affair was an example of the press using cultural differences to cause prejudice against them under the guise of liberalism and freedom of speech:

'again, innit conflicting values innit, people don't agree with this so it's 'oh look at these dodgy people on the other side of the ocean look at what they think of doing this and look what they think of doing that.' (male)

Rather than attribute the cultural differences of Muslims to the failure of the relationship of Sarah Cook and Musa, the Muslim groups were more likely to blame Sarah's inadequacies and her lack of understanding of what is required in Islam:

I: 'Why do you think they did separate?'

'She probably did not fit in with what Islam wanted.' (female)

And where cultural differences were perceived as a problem for non-Muslims, such as the conversion of Jemima Khan, this was seen as positive by the Muslims:

'They start a new life.' (male)

They argued that the media uses religion as the scapegoat when actions may be as a result of the person's custom or own moral beliefs:

'They know women are weak in their heart and they know, it's mainly the customs not the Islamic culture, but the customs that people have that kind of put women down in Islam, well not in Islam but in the culture and the media don't, doesn't distinguish between the culture of the people and the religion itself and that causes confusion.' (female)

The Contact group showed an awareness of cultural issues and media bias:

'I don't think there would have been such a problem with this, with the age gap, if the guy hadn't been from Turkey and Muslim. It's a completely alien culture.' (female)

They also advocate tolerance and equality where possible:

'it's about knowing people really, being able to accept other people, you know, their different cultures and way of life.'

However, their knowledge lacks the depth and understanding that would allow them to counter consistent and stereotypical images which have taken such a hold regarding meanings of Islam. They are therefore positioned by the texts, as with the non-Contact groups, arguing that to achieve a tolerant society, integration is necessary so we can learn about each other. Both groups advocate integration as a way of overcoming cultural differences despite their different levels of cultural awareness. The differences are that whilst the Contact group appear to genuinely believe in equality, for the non-Contact group this appears to be a cover for more extreme views. The level to which the Other was seen as different was indicated by their lexicalisations. The terms 'British' and 'normal' excludes Muslim children who should mix with 'normal kids' and go to 'normal institutions'. The main reason for promoting assimilation then, rather than to advance more harmonious relations, is to minimise difficulties caused to 'normal' British citizens. Cultural difference is expressed, then, in the abnormal rites which restrict the majority:

I: 'and why do you think their relationship broke up?'

1: 'The culture had a big impact on her relationship.'

2: 'she wasn't used to that culture.'

I: 'what culture?'

2: 'The Turkish one, he wanted her to stay at home all day and cook and clean and stuff and not go out anywhere and she just wasn't used to it.'

3: 'Yeah, she was only 14 and she was just like used to going out and having fun and everything, not being like a wife.' (females, non-Contact)

1: 'she was too young and she wouldn't be able to get used to trying a different lifestyle at that age anyway.'

I mean she changed from one place to another and it just didn't work out.

I mean it says here something about he wanted her to stay in the house and everything, wouldn't let her go out, you know, I mean that's one thing you have got to put up with in that sort of religion I suppose.'

2: 'I think you've got to put that in perspective, that's compared to England which is a hell of a lot more liberal where she was put in so I bet it weren't, I mean compared to that situation, I bet it weren't as bad as she made out. It just is to her she can't get use to it, she can't adjust.'

She didn't realise what she was letting herself in for.' (males, Contact)

'It's like, I don't know, if the State's putting money in to run these special schools for Muslims, I mean, they are not even conforming to the British way of life, they are like speaking their language and doing all that which I don't think is right when they are going to be getting a really good standard of education when most schools in Britain need funding.' (female, non-Contact)

For both groups the cultural differences of the Other have been naturalised and are seen as normal behaviour for them (but negative in their eyes). This illustrates how this kind of discourse allows its perpetrators to take on a superior stance but attempts by the Contact group to display tolerance is also evident:

'the funny thing is from the Saudi-Arabian people's point of view that probably the way they were treated was perfectly acceptable and they were probably well treated compared to someone who was from there would be treated because they are British, they get a lot of credibility from that, emm, it is probably the British's point of view because we wouldn't treat them like that because we're Britain, *we treat people differently* so we have a different point of view to them and it's all being open-minded isn't it?' (male, Contact) (emphasis added)

'it sort of depends on what values they hold, their values are obviously so different, they see this as an acceptable thing.'
(female, Contact regarding Sarah Cook)

'The thing is though, you don't take into account that it is a totally different culture, that's normal for them to do stuff like that.' (female, non-Contact regarding Saudi punishments)

For those who have no contact with Muslims, their lack of knowledge allows negative prejudices to be manipulated by the press, resulting in a general confusion and the homogenisation of all minorities. This is evident in the reaction to the following story where few details are known and a superficial knowledge of the religion allows papers to play up and feed prejudices about petty non sensical rites.⁷ Minorities are therefore perceived to be responsible for their own situation and prejudice against them:

⁷ The story, from *The Sun's* front page, recounted how a 'normal' white woman living in an ethnic area had been forced to remove pottery pigs from her window by the Council under the orders of local Muslims who

1: 'it just sounds like they're upset because she's doing something that any normal person in our society would do but they wouldn't in theirs.'

2: 'that's it though they can't expect to have the same norms and values in this country as they would back home.'

The whole of Britain is not going to change because the minorities.

I mean it's not just them either, it's loads of other minorities everywhere that, they don't, you'd expect them to fit into Britain not just to like, when stories like that come up, that like little stupid things like that, I mean that's when you get your negative attitude because it is just, you just start thinking: what?' (females, non-Contact)

Westernisation

Rather than perceiving themselves as Westernised, Muslims saw themselves as distinctly British Muslims with the emphasis on Muslim, being both different and having commonalities with Muslims throughout the world. To the Muslims, their 'Westernisation' does not mean the loss or watering down of their religious identity. In fact they objected to a concept of 'Britishness' that excludes this:

'I've got a problem with that you know.

I should identify myself as a British person and things like that.

It's like Islam right, it's something everyone can identify with, it's just the whole. You just can't, em, of course I'm British, everyone who lives here is, you can't get away from that but I am a Muslim as well.' (male)

Both non-Muslim groups, however, saw 'Westernisation' in its more widely used sense, a process which involves losing aspects of traditional ways of life and thinking. Other ethnic/religious group members participating recognised that this process was taking place but approached it positively, how they have adapted and repositioned themselves to a new way of life:

'I think everything's different now.

It is all right to have love marriage and now my parents think it is all right as well because I think people have changed.

They've grown up with other people's ideas haven't they?

(female, Contact)

took offence. There was no mention in the article about racist abuse they had suffered from her or pages of the Koran which appeared with the pigs.

Other non-Muslims in the Contact group suggested that their Muslim friends were more Westernised, possibly one of the reasons for their disassociation of them with the Islam 'out there'. This is perceived as a positive process by both non-Muslim groups, the non-Contact groups only able to speculate due to their lack of experience:

1: 'well a lot of them aren't that strict kind of thing.

Like you have the first generation which came over here years ago and they are really really strict and then when it goes down you find that the kids and their parents aren't that strict in the religion..' //

2: 'they become more Westernised don't they?'

1: 'yeah.' (male and female, non-Contact)

Foreign

Muslims believe that being seen as 'foreign' is a crucial factor in their treatment. The homogenisation of Muslims ensures this and therefore they tend to see the representation of foreign countries and affairs as negative. However, they too displayed a lack of knowledge about foreign issues and so although they challenged the images due to their knowledge of prejudice against Muslims, they also accepted some elements of the article, negotiating. This was evident in their reactions to aggression where they argued that foreign countries, whether they are involved in what they are accused of or not, should be left to operate their own affairs without Western interference:

'it's like every time there's something goes wrong in a different country, other countries always get involved with what's going on there, they don't leave it to that country to sort it out so it's like too many people get involved in what's going on and then they start accusing people of doing this and doing that so it's not really right.' (female)

'It is to do with one country and they are just involving other countries in it. They shouldn't really do that and it's not as if the terrorists are going to come round the whole of Britain killing everybody, because they are not, because if they are hiding out here, they are going to keep a low profile and not do something so they get caught out'

This female accepts that Muslim fundamentalists may reside in Britain but rejects the idea that they are a threat. Below, the same participant again criticises the homogenisation of Muslims. Her lack of knowledge and inability to reject the article outright causes her to disassociate British Muslims with this dominant media image:

'They (the media) just think about what's going on outside of, they don't think about the Muslims here because the Muslims here are really nice and nobody really causes no trouble here so, they just think about what's going on in the Middle East but that's not got nothing to do with Britain cos we're not causing nothing over here we're just living here and doing what we are told to do really.'

Tensions are felt because global mediations of Islam challenge the Muslim readers experience of Islam in Britain (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994).⁸ However, this anti-local response is more common based on 'kinship' ties which are derived from common experiences of oppression (Gardner and Shukur, 1994). According to Jacobson (1997: 254), this 'universalism' provides a 'means of dealing with the ambiguities and contradictions contained within their social environment'.

The dominant image of foreign news is well-known by the Contact group. When asked about this, they articulate only images of war:

- 1: 'just the sort of thing that goes on in Israel and Arabia and that where there is trouble, cos most British news seems to be about foreign affairs anyway, that's mostly what you see.'
- 2: 'basically what is happening in Arabia, wars, stuff like that, conflict and that sort of stuff.' (males)

However, 'foreign' also represents to both groups something alien, a difference which causes problems. Their responses to the Sarah Cook story include astonishment that firstly, she moved to and married a 'foreigner' (implying all sorts of difficulties) and that it was allowed to go ahead (in fact it was not legal). It is interpreted as evidence of the primitive nature and inferiority of these countries that allow these things to take place:

'well nobody when you have had the kind of life you have had here wants to go to some foreign country and treated like a slave do you?' (female, non-Contact)

'It shouldn't be like that in other countries because marrying at 13 is just ridiculous.' (male, Contact)

⁸ It should be noted that the Muslims' interpretations are not based on a 'real Islam' but are subjective interpretations in a specific historical context (Said, 1981).

The non-Contact group had much less awareness of foreign affairs which were associated mainly with war. However, these groups alone perceived British Muslims as also foreign as a way of excluding them. None of them considered that Muslims may be British born assuming their origins to be elsewhere, thus confirming Muslim fears. The use of the English language was particularly important to this group as a sign of a willingness to participate/assimilate into British life. The language used by these group reveals how they consider minorities even when trying to show some empathy:

'I think that they should still have their own religion, I mean if they wanted to come to any old school that kind of all the religions are mixed, I think that's fair enough but I don't think they should be made to be entirely British when they are not.' (female, non-Contact)

'then there is more of a gap growing and it leads to more racism cos nobody's being like, nobody's speaking to each other and they're like, I mean, it's like they're being educated in their own country because they are not even doing any British stuff.' (female, non-Contact)

'sometimes, you'll go into a shop and there will be a group of Indian girls and they can speak in their language. They may not be talking about you but you don't know and I find that ignorant sometimes so you are a bit conscious of what they are saying (agreement).' (female, non-Contact)

1: 'It would be bizarre living in a country, in a different country to where you came from but still getting on with everyday life differently.

2: 'yeah it's typical of lots of places though isn't it? Like America or..'

1: 'well America's different, it's just a bloody free for all.' (females non-Contact)

This last sentence indicates the priorities and fears here, that Britain should not also become a 'free for all'. Despite these insinuations, there was little use of the term immigrant to describe Muslims, possibly also due to a lack of knowledge and changes in coverage.

Threat

Muslims were particularly vocal about the perceived threat of Islam which they saw as being perpetuated through the media due to its expansion. This (expansion) was treated as positive:

I: 'So why do you think the press are particularly hostile towards Muslims?'

1: 'it's like the fastest growing religion in the world yeah and the colonies are gone, everything's gone and this is like a danger for them now, innit?'

That's what it is. But if you really think about Islam, it is not about danger,
it is not about//

2: 'Islam gives you a choice'

1: 'it is not about to take over the world/'

2: 'they don't say to people you become a Muslim, they give the
choice to people, that's what it is based on.' (males)

Both males and females are keen to counter the image of enforced conversion in a
desire to expand the religion further:

'he's not doing it because he just wants a mass number you know, it's not
like that, he's saying it because he can see the future of the children.' (female)

Whilst these groups unanimously reject the idea of a terrorist threat, the Contact
group generally accepted it. Despite their age, they hold detailed models of The Rushdie
Affair based on press coverage, which demonstrates their awareness of cultural and political
issues. This threat was apparent even to the most critically aware members of the group:

1: 'I mean the Salman Rushdie thing. It's quite ridiculous some
of the attitudes people took when he wrote this book. They just wanted him dead.
There were just scores of people wanting him dead, to just burn him alive.'

2: 'Did anyone (Muslims) mention any of the things he said?'

3: 'Well I've met two and they said that they think Salman Rushdie
should be killed.' (males and female, Contact)

Muslims were not perceived in this way by the non-Contact group due to their lack
of knowledge of The Rushdie Affair and fundamentalism. Rather, Muslims were grouped
together with other minorities as a threat in terms of cultural and population invasion:

'The main culture's always going to be British or will it? That's the
question!' (female, non-Contact)

Traditions/ Primitive nature of Islam

For Muslims, Britain is changing, gradually becoming a multicultural society,
reflecting the circles they move in. However, they are aware of their media image and keen
to counter it. Most of the positive statements made by Muslims, here, involve an
explanation of their values in order to counter criticisms. The strength of Islam and their
adherence to it is seen as positive unlike the attitude of non-Muslims who take this to be

unnecessarily strict. These were explained with pride in relation to conversion, the treatment of women, the growth of Islam, equality, family values, where Islam stands in relation to *jihad* and Islamic law relating to Salman Rushdie. This constitutes a defensive reaction to accusations directed towards Islam, an attempt to educate the non-Muslim researcher and as a means of justifying opinions. It is evident that most reactions to texts are based on the value of preserving their own tradition. Upholding the values of Islam to these Muslims is more important than any of the values the Western press espouse such as mixing in school, romantic love, freedom of speech and other tokens of Western identity such as their clothes. This is in contrast to non-Muslims from other religions. These individuals from different religions adhere equally to scientific, liberal beliefs like freedom of speech. Muslims made negative statements about the failure of the media to explain their values properly and to the effects this may be having on both the faithful and the majority population:

1: 'Under Islamic law..... they'd call him (Rushdie) and they'd ask him why did he do this, what led you to do this and try to figure things out and they'd ask him if he wanted to take back what he said. If you think about it, what the West saw was Khomeini some mad leader in the East and somebody to chop Rushdie's head off. It's different, you've got to go through processes. It's not like one leader at the top that carries out, there is like proper laws on this in Islam. What it is is like, Islam is an economic system, how to live your life, laws everything//'

2: 'how to live your life, everything's covered.' (males, Muslim)

'maybe even like lose faith all together and that's not good like, once you lose your faith right and faith is what you are, makes you believe, your values and that and once you've lost your faith, you've lost yourself, as well.' (female, Muslim)

The Contact group also recognised the changing nature of society in Britain (given their multicultural environment) but objected to being dragged backwards because of this. The main reason they appeared to believe this was in relation to the blasphemy laws and The Rushdie Affair. However, they also challenged what they believed to be other Islamic values relating to the treatment of women, primitive punishments abroad and the separation of the sexes as examples of this:

'A 12th century law for an outdated concept has no place in our society.' (female, Contact)

'you've got some silly, really old law, thousands of years old that bears no relation whatsoever to present society, the blasphemy laws.' (male, Contact)

'it's just scared people, you know. They are not willing to see change and it's like these Muslims, they saw someone with an idea, with an opinion and because it wasn't stuck to their ideas, they didn't want him. It was like, chuck him out and kill him.' (female, Contact)

Here, a Hindu describes Muslims as 'scared', not willing to adapt to change. The uncompromising nature of Islam is a feature articulated by all non-Muslims.

For the non-Contact group, it is strict adherence to beliefs and the treatment of women that is seen as backward and uncompromising (both groups used the recent Saudi punishments in relation to the British Nurses as an example of primitiveness). This aspect of Islam is naturalised to the non-Muslim, accepted without question as an integral part of the religion. The non-Contact group articulated less on this subject as they had little knowledge of The Rushdie Affair and blasphemy laws:

'I mean they have major strong beliefs, like here it says, 'many families go without extra food or clothing to send their children there because they appreciate our unique environment'. I mean they are saying that about the school but I mean that is just well over the top when your family is not even eating properly. I mean, I know they have really strong beliefs and stick by them strictly but I just don't think it's needed.' (female, non-Contact)

These groups did not perceive Britain to be a multicultural society. This factor seems to depend upon the groups shared experiences of their own social worlds which, for them, is not multicultural. It would also involve an acceptance of the Other as British which these groups do not yet do. These groups were evenly split between those who believed society to be secular (although initially no-one knew what this term meant, again reflecting their cultural ignorance) and those who believed it to be mainly Christian. This was dependent on the extent to which they had daily contact with 'Christians':

I: 'Do you think we are living in a multicultural society now?'

All: 'no'.

1: 'cultures are present but it is not multicultural.'

2: 'well you've got different religions but it is different Christian religions isn't it? It's not completely different. It is mostly Christian'.

1: 'it seems like a melting pot of cultures now, there is so many different people over here, Chinese, bloody American everything and there is always so many people over here so it's..'.

2: 'yeah but they are all minorities'

1: 'The main cultures always going to be British or will it that's the question?'

2: 'I assume it to be all like different Christian religions and if they are not Christian, they are either a minority or atheist or something'.

3: 'yeah I think there is still a decent amount of people, you know quite large amount of people who have a Christian belief.'

2: 'yeah I do too.'

1: 'I'd say, I don't think it is going to be that Christian in the future.'

3: 'although I know a lot of people who don't have a religion'

1: 'I don't think people are that bothered about religion any more.' (females, non-Contact)

Illegality

There were some references to illegality concerning the behaviour of Musa in the Sarah Cook story. There are participants in all groups who severely object to this and even equate it to paedophilia. This includes some Muslim males (it is males more so than females in all groups, indicating some policing of their gender and disassociating themselves from this kind of behaviour) which shows that being a Muslim does not always automatically assure rejection of a negative article about a Muslim. Cultural proximity is at work here too, Turkish culture also being alien to these British Muslims of mainly Indian origin. This would also seem to indicate that the topic has some bearing on perceptions of the Other since this was not a recurring perception of Muslims but has proved to be a significant discourse in the content analysis of papers. The choice of articles for the focus groups may have made a difference here, the Sarwar and fundamentalism stories excluded.

Perception of the Other

The non-Contact group did not have a clear schemas (van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b) in relation to Muslims and discussed them mainly in terms of the Other, i.e. in broader racial/ethnic terms rather than specifically about Islam as they lacked the knowledge about specific groups. Although often making claims to 'not being racist' followed by disclaimers, the language and hostile tone in the voice indicated otherwise. They spent time defending and justifying reasons as to why they feel resentment and antagonism towards what they perceive as the invasion of their territory at their own expense. They have constructed stereotypes on the basis of both media images and experiences which are employed to reinforce feelings that have emanated from their social and cultural backgrounds. They are

very much aware of people of 'colour' in their environment, but their lack of contact with them means they remain strangers who are hostile and aggressive:

'I feel embarrassed and stuff like that because I 'd never say anything like that but I mean I can see where he's coming from (Granddad), I mean it's only lately I've realised about what he's saying and why he's saying it and my parents are just the same but I mean I 'm not, I haven't got such an extreme attitude, I just, I'm not racist, I mean I've got black friends who aren't Muslims but black friends, they are no different or anything like that but I mean just when things like this come up you start to think negatively about it.' (female, non-Contact)

'I can get on with them, if you start talking, like if you are standing in a queue and there is an Indian girl next to them or whatever and you start chatting away to her, then yeah that is cool, you're chatting away to her, there is no, it's not like racist like that, it's just this negative feeling that, how you've heard things in papers.' (female, non-Contact)

Stereotypical images of wealthy Asians are also constructed in this way, in an area where many of the Asians are more economically secure and confident than in the past. This combines with images of temples, the work ethic, jewellery and fast cars to fuse the stereotype together as the non-Muslim remains an on-looker. They cannot get behind these images as they do not mix with Muslims. Here, one of the non-Muslims who has more experience of Muslims, although not first hand, argues for a more realistic image of poverty. Meaning is made through a complex process of text, experience, confused 'knowledge' and historical prejudices passed down through generations to create a hostile and now jealous resentment as the Other is perceived as bettering themselves in 'our' society. The media contributes and exacerbates these feelings by providing discourses which allows people to make sense of their experiences:

1: 'yeah, but Jim they have all the bloody spangly stuff (laughter)'

2: 'that's because they work hard/'

1: 'big rugs and stuff, they do!' (male and female, non-Contact)

The Contact group have a different experience of the Other. Their multicultural upbringing and environment means they have a liberal attitude to other races, belief in

tolerance, equality and fairness for all. This attitude varies amongst the group's participants from being very positive to grudgingly accepting the situation:

1: 'it's about knowing people really, being able to accept other people, you know, their different cultures and way of life.'

2: 'coming from a school where there is lots of different religions and cultures in it, you just accept it don't you, you have to just learn to live with it don't you, you have to learn to live with other people.' (males, Contact)

They are acutely aware that racism is not acceptable in their environment. Their responses, then, to questions about textual action which they find disagreeable are muted but expose underlying feelings:

'It's acceptable I suppose.' (female, Contact)

However, their feelings about Islam are clearly different. Although cultural proximity does appear to have some impact when it comes to race, religious identities are ignored for the sake of a harmonious environment:

'well I suppose I don't really discuss their religious beliefs.' (male, Contact)

It is clear that media images have not only contributed to an environment where it is acceptable to be openly hostile about Islam but that even where people have contact with Muslims, the general suspicion that has been created towards the religion and its people means it is ignored as a subject for discussion. This means that these non-Muslims are not able to develop a greater understanding of the religion which may help dispel the media images. Thus, a person that shows sensitivity towards others and mixes frequently with people of many differing races can say of Islam:

1 'well yes like I just made a statement there are serious problems...particularly with Islam, particularly evident I'd say, although you can clearly fault the Christian religion, but most extreme I'd say was in the case of Islam.'

2 'what are its problems then?'

3 'It's very fundamentalist and very strict.'

2 'well all religions are...'

3 'no, not going to mosques 3 times a day, I've talked to people about it. They all have to read the Koran.' (males, Contact)⁹

⁹ The objection here mainly functions to oppose the first speaker where there is a history of antagonism.

In this section, I have tried to show how Muslims are understood by different groups. It is clear that the non-Muslims' discourse does match that of the press particularly in terms of gender, primitivism, homogeneity, restriction and threat. This is endemic of the global meanings of Islam which have been so widely criticised in the literature. As we come closer to home, there is more variation in the understandings by the non-Muslim groups; the discourse of those with contact is closer to the liberal interpretations of *The Guardian* with its secular multiculturalism whilst the non-Contact group share the discourse of the conservative lower tabloids, the Other undifferentiated.

The Muslim groups are vocal in their rejection of this discourse and display a desire to correct the images.¹⁰ Whilst there may be some propensity to exaggerate criticisms in this context, these perceptions are consistent with the findings of the content analysis. It should be considered also that even if perceptions are slightly exaggerated in some way, as Halloran (1995) suggests, it is these that are likely to be influential in the formation of attitudes and motivation. Expressed in this context, they also represent the voicing of a wider dissatisfaction to their situation.

Already, then, the varying (and shared) interpretations of these differentially situated social groups are becoming evident. In the following section, I will examine these patterns of interpretation in relation to the texts.

Readings

In this section I examine how the participants make meaning from these texts and what interpretive strategies, scripts and frameworks of understanding are used for sense-making? It is recognised that not all media texts contain dominant meanings. In this case, it will be read that these texts are oppositional or negotiate with dominant meanings and the subject position a person then takes in relation to the text may be for example; oppositional to its preferred meanings whilst reflecting the dominant meanings in society. The Tables below provide quantitative evidence of the subject positions taken by participants in relation to the texts. The figures represent the number of statements made by each group within each subject position.

¹⁰ In audience research with Muslims, Gunter and Vinney (1993) similarly found that Muslims were concerned with their negative stereotyping, in particular with reference to fanaticism, aggression, Rushdie and the treatment of women.

Table 5.3: Subject position in relation to texts.

Status	Preferred	Negotiates	Oppositional
Muslims	68	70	182
Contact	150	61	33
Non Contact	203	41	49

Table 5.3 provides clear tabular evidence of the variant readings by different groups with Muslims mainly occupying oppositional positions and the non-Contact group accepting the preferred readings. This evidence will be supported by qualitative data because:

- a) *The Guardian* text on education has a positive position towards Muslims,
- b) some groups were interviewed more than others.

The breakdown of responses to particular texts is provided below:

Blasphemy Article: Preferred meaning=negative (towards Muslims)¹¹

	Preferred	Negotiates	Oppositional
Muslims	9	4	69
Contact	52	7	5
Non-Contact	56	10	1

Table 5.4: Subject positions located in response to the blasphemy article

Sarah Cook article: Preferred meaning=negative

	Preferred	Negotiates	Oppositional
Muslims	17	20	51
Contact	89	40	12
Non-Contact	122	23	2

Table 5.5: Subject positions located in response to the Cook article

Education article: Preferred meaning=mainly positive

	Preferred	Negotiates	Oppositional
Muslims	18	16	5
Contact	9	14	16
Non-Contact	9	8	46

Table 5.6: Subject positions located in response to the education article

Fundamentalism: Negative towards Islamic militants, supports President of Egypt's view that Islamic fundamentalists should not be allowed to hide in Britain but shows hostility to the President for interference.

	Preferred	Negotiates	Oppositional
Muslims	15	21	57

Table 5.7: Subject positions located in response to the Luxor article

¹¹ My readings of these texts can be found in Chapter 4. For a reminder of which texts were used, see Chapter 2, p. 70 and Appendix g.

Table 5.8: Positive and Negative references made in relation to topic.

		Cook	Blasphemy	Education	Fundamentalism
Positive References	Muslims	41*	74	23	9
	Contact	8	13	10	0
	Non-Contact	18	2	12	0
	Total	67	89	45	9
Negative References	Muslims	124	363	10	90
	Contact	99	139	81	5
	Non-Contact	104	32	270	5
	Total	327	534	361	100

*re Islam and conversion

The following tables reveal, to some extent, the inadequacies with the encoding/decoding model. I not only found that the groups were positioned differentially in relation to the texts, but their perception of these positions differed according to their perceptions of the positions of the texts. For example, some of the participants responded to the event being portrayed rather than the paper's construction of it. In this case, the preferred meaning is not recognised (as ideological), but meaning is structured or reconstructed by responding directly to the event. This occurs on several occasions, in particular with the Muslim female group, and is likely to be based on the combination of political naiveté and lower media literacy. For example, the female Muslims responded positively to the blasphemy article because they believed the event to be positive. In this case, they take on an oppositional position to the preferred meaning in the text but do not recognise their oppositional position, rather, they see themselves agreeing with the text (Table 5.9). The non-Muslims reading this also believed it to be positive (the Contact group ideological, in supporting the law and Labour). They therefore claimed to disagree with the article when in actual fact they are in agreement with its preferred meaning. This is apparent amongst some of the non-Muslims in reaction to the Sarah Cook story, (Table 5.10), who perceive themselves as disagreeing with the article because they disagree with the events in it (when again they accept its preferred meaning). There are also examples of where the text's preferred meaning is recognised as explicitly ideological. Sometimes this appears to be based on whether the ideology is 'revealed' to the reader because it is at odds with their own positions (non-Contact group and education article, Table 5.11). At other times it depends on the ability to deconstruct texts (media literacy) combined with high levels of media interest and informed critical individuals (this does not, however, necessarily mean that the text's message will be resisted). This is an indication of the range of possibilities available to readers when interpreting texts. They are not statically placed in a position of

oppositional or dominant reading because meaning is multilayered, having contradictory spaces, and relates to a multiplicity of identifications and interests. However, what is evident is that meaning is shared amongst different social groups with similar characteristics who therefore constitute communities of meaning. I shall now examine these differential subject positions in more detail.

Table 5.9: Perceptions of subject positions located in relation to the Blasphemy article.

Blasphemy Article	Muslim males	Muslim females	Contact group	Non-Contact
How the participants perceive the ARTICLE:	Negative (Ideological)	Positive, supports Labour, (in relation to the event)	Positive, supports Labour, (in relation to event) (Ideological)	Positive, supports Labour, (in relation to event)
Response:	Reject preferred meaning, agree with laws	Reject preferred meaning, agree with laws	Accept preferred meaning, disagree with laws	Accept preferred meaning, disagree with laws

Table 5.10: Perceptions of subject positions located in relation to the Cook article.

Cook article	Muslim males	Muslim females	Contact group	Non-Contact
See ARTICLE as:	Negative (Ideological)	Negative (Ideological)	Negative (Ideological)	Negative (Ideological)
Response:	Reject preferred meaning relating to culture/Islam, accept some of preferred meanings	Reject preferred meaning relating to culture/Islam, accept some of preferred meanings	Accept preferred meaning, disagree with events	Accept preferred meaning, disagree with events

Table 5.11: Perceptions of subject positions located in relation to the Education article.

Education article	Muslim females	Contact group	Non-Contact
See ARTICLE as:	Positive (in relation to the event)	Positive (ideological)	Positive (ideological)
Response:	Accept preferred meaning, agree with schools	Negotiate preferred meaning. Agree with points on equality, prefer integration as solution	Reject preferred meaning, disagree with schools

Table 5.12: Perceptions of subject positions located in relation to the Luxor article.

Fundamentalism	Muslim females
See ARTICLE as:	Mainly negative
Response:	Negotiate

Muslim males

Muslim males fit more neatly into an oppositional position than their female counterparts. They are more likely to have a political conscience, are media literate and read texts as ideological, rejecting them on this basis. However, there are still slight differences between them, reflected in the papers they read which indicate a more critical perspective.

The broadsheet readers are less likely to be positioned by the text in any way. Due to their specific identities as *British* Muslims, these groups do not automatically or always remain in oppositional mode. When the values in the text match their own, (marrying age), they are more likely to accept dominant meanings.

It is fair to say that with the blasphemy article this group takes almost an entirely oppositional position. However, the text's macrostructural organisation works to position the subjects into discussing blasphemy rather than religious discrimination. It has an agenda setting effect then, even with this group who reject the dominant meanings. The male Muslims are much more vocal and emotionally opposed to Rushdie and focus their discussion on this aspect of the article. They resist the text's meanings arguing that he committed the ultimate sin in betraying his religion, that the book should be banned, that Christians are hypocritical in allowing him to criticise Islam but would not allow the same treatment of their religion, that Islamophobia does exist, that the laws should exist as a point of equality, that minorities have the right to their religion and other rights despite being a minority, and reject the representation of Muslims and their reaction to Rushdie's book, (although they articulated disapproval about the way the book was protested against, it was felt recourse to these methods was inevitable because Muslims have no other way of voicing their objections in this country). They objected to the sole focus on Islam in relation to blasphemy and argued that there should be limits to freedom of speech when it is offensive to others.

An initial response to the article as being fairly balanced by some of the less media literate of the group was based on the presence of positive quotes. They were also positioned by the text to identify government support for the laws but responded positively in opposition to the intended response. They also accepted arguments regarding the unworkability of the law but this was mainly based on their experiences of the race laws rather than textual references, although Northern Ireland was selected as an example from the text (all groups refer to this: it shows how people use textual references to illustrate their views if they agree with them, providing an easy way of backing an argument and investing some authority in the text, see p. 303). However, because of their opposition to the text, they are more likely to use experience as a resource for resistance.

However, with the Cook article, more elements of the message are accepted (due to cultural distance and symmetrical values). With this article they are positioned by the

article's representation of the parents' irresponsibility, (in taking money for the story), and by the framing of the relationship as a holiday romance:

'oh come on, if a 12 year old girl goes on holiday and falls in love with the waiter, it is just a crush if you think about it at the end of the day, a 12 year old girl and her parents taking her seriously about her parents wanting to marry him and with there being such a distance.'

However, they remain cynical about the article, believing it to be culturally biased and concentrate on discussing this, attending to the specifics of the article for a much shorter time than any other group. In opposition to the text, they were more likely to believe it was the Cooks at fault rather than the Turk and reacted positively to their conversions (whilst recognising that the article represent hers as forced). They were able to show quite easily how the structure revealed its ideological bias. Their awareness of and experience of cultural bias provided them with situation models which made them much more dismissive of both articles.

Muslim females

The females were much more conformist than their male counterparts. They therefore focused more on responding to questions than pursuing their own agenda. Their desire to portray a reasonable face of Islam was reflected in cautious answers to questions, careful wording and by showing awareness of alternative perspectives. They also showed less awareness of news and political issues in general, less media literacy and were therefore more likely to accept messages within the texts than the males.

Although mainly positioned oppositionally to texts due to their awareness of bias towards Muslims and Muslim identification, they did, however, slip in and out of preferred, oppositional and negotiated positions on the basis of similarly held values or cultural proximity.

In particular, their gender positioned them in opposition to the Cook article. It was its representation of Islam's treatment of women which was most fervently objected to. They also resisted the preferred meanings by attributing the responsibility to Sarah, responding positively to conversion, suggesting that Musa's point of view was excluded and objecting to the use of the term 'Moslem' throughout.

Similarly to the males, they articulated oppositional responses to the blasphemy article. However, their reading of this article illustrates their less political identities. They

saw the article as positive (i.e. supporting the laws) in response to the event, even though they disagreed with views expressed in it. They were much more cautious in their responses, presenting both sides, speaking in neutral tones and in the third party to avoid controversy. They did not linger on political issues for long, preferring to focus on faith:

‘all I know is that he, (Rushdie) that a lot of people hate him but equally right, a lot of people do follow him and he’s been in the news quite a lot.’

‘Well, if you are looking at it from Western eyes you could say that it was his opinion and that he did have the freedom of speech but if you see it from a religious perspective and that is any religion right, you would probably say like he should not have slandered it writing contradictory things about Islam and that.’

Although their memories of The Rushdie Affair on television correlate closely with media images such as marches and book burning, they objected to this representation. Responses illustrate how reality is viewed from one’s own perspective. Here, a participant articulates a belief that the majority of people objected to Rushdie book:

‘If 10% of the people don’t like it then that’s all right but if 90% of that population don’t like it then there has got to be something done about it.’

These responses illustrate the importance of religious identification in framing the interpretation of the Muslims. However, differential points of identification result in preferred readings. Their symmetrical values (with the text) led them to agree that Sarah Cook was too young for a marriage which was also rushed into. Equally, they stressed the importance of parental responsibility. They were also positioned by both the Cook text into discussing the actors as they were categorised by the article in terms of age, nationality, and vocation (waiter) and by the blasphemy article, interpreting the law as being exclusive to Islam (also possibly due to the focus on their own collectivities).

Cultural distance was also a factor in accepting dominant meanings. Although they rejected the meanings in the text which implicated Islam, in the Cook article, their ignorance of Turkish culture meant they accepted the events but suggested they were a result of cultural practices thus making a ‘religion-ethnic culture distinction’ (Jacobson, 1997: 240). This negotiation with the text shows how cultural distance applies to British Muslims and

Islam alone cannot be taken as a means to opposing representations of it, knowledge is an important factor in resisting meanings.

As illustrated in the previous section, the importance of cultural proximity is especially apparent by the Muslims' response to the *Times* text on fundamentalism. In this article the meanings are multi faceted, the paper's position shifting in response to various aspects of the event. The Muslims too, have to negotiate with the awareness they do have, objecting to aspects of the text and anchored by others due to their 'conflicting points of identity' (Hall, 1992b). They voice dissent in relation to the stereotypes of Islam and violence, interpret the funding of Middle Eastern groups as suggesting the Middle East is poor and object to this, and reject the idea that these groups are a threat to the UK. However, they agree with the President in his accusations that 'killers' should not be allowed to reside in Britain but suggest that these charges are not supported with evidence. They disagree with the killings but disassociate them from Islam.

This illustrates how Muslims are predisposed to oppose dominant meanings in their knowledge and experience of cultural bias but often lack the specific knowledge to do so. However, this lack of knowledge forces them to engage in a different interpretive strategy. They re-focus attention in the article away from the Islamic militants to the theme of **foreign interference**. This is evidence that people, no matter what material they are given, will at least attempt to formulate meanings which are symmetrical to their own ideologies, even if these appear unsatisfactory and unstable. They use the textual information provided to construct their own meanings as with attempts to shift the blame for funding to non-Muslim groups. The responses to this article illustrate the tensions between local and global identifications for Muslims as with Werbner's (1994) Pakistanis' responses to the Gulf War. The global sympathetic identification tends to outweigh local interests as 'an all encompassing frame of reference' in recognition of world-wide inequalities (Jacobson, 1997: 239).

A further illustration of the complexity of meaning production is in the responses to *The Guardian* text on the funding of Muslim schools. This text negotiates with dominant meanings by supporting the schools and equality for Muslims but introduces an element of doubt through the idea of segregation in accordance with its liberal ideology. Texts, then, as well as audiences, are sites of contradictions and tension. The group views the text as balanced or positive but not ideological. For them, ideology or bias is associated only with

negative representations of Islam. Thus, the responses are oppositional in relation to dominant meanings but in this case correlate with the preferred meanings of the text, supporting funded Muslim schools. The responses to this text illustrate the activity of cultural proximity to the full. Representation is based solely on British Muslims and this allows a straightforward interpretation based on first hand knowledge and experience. The point of view represented in the article is naturalised to the Muslims as it represents their own common sensical perspective. The presence of this article in the groups has revealed how ideology is naturalised and only becomes apparent when it is in opposition to the readers ideologies. This is also illustrated by the Muslims selection of Ray Honeyford's quote in relation to segregation which *is* seen as biased. The inclusion of references to the National Curriculum to avert fears over the standard of teaching are interpreted as a concern to the Muslims who suggest this may lead to the compromising of Islamic values, illustrating their more extreme position in relation to dominant values compared to that of the paper.

Non-Muslims

Contact group

The variable of cultural proximity is also applicable here as these groups' multicultural environment have given them a liberal tolerant attitude to other ethnic groups. They therefore find themselves in a position of negotiation with these texts as they hold strong beliefs relating to equality and anti-discrimination. However, their liberal ideologies are in direct opposition to how they perceive Islam; as an antiquated religion. This appears to be based mainly on media representation due to a failure to become familiar with the complex identities of their ethnic friends. The struggle to reconcile these beliefs is apparent throughout. They are therefore positioned mainly in line with preferred and dominant meanings which in this context are appropriate to their liberalism.

These groups have both a high political and cultural awareness and a high degree of media literacy. This allows them to recognise the ideology in the texts including, to some extent, the cultural bias and yet are still mainly anchored within the preferred meanings. This is particularly apparent with the Cook article whereby both groups accept all aspects of the preferred meaning. There is a slight variation in the groups between those who read the article completely symmetrically; these are more likely to read tabloid papers and use TV as a source of news and have right of centre views; and those that show more critical ability.

They are more likely to read broadsheets and regularly, show an interest in the news and have liberal/left of centre politics. Although these participants try to examine reasons for actions other than those offered by the text, the group dynamic and lack of alternative information secures their positioning.

These groups' political awareness became all the more apparent in the discussion on blasphemy. They were able to discuss things at a higher level, introducing related ideas from outside the text, showing evidence of having discussed such topics before, yet their liberal ideologies secure their positioning within the freedom of speech, non-censorship perspective:

'I think the first problem is defining religion which seems to me impossible.. well I'd say religion was impossible to define.
You could say militant atheism is a religion and if militant atheism is a religion then clearly it's (the law) nonsense.'

Their interest and knowledge of politics leads them to interpret the article as more about a political battle than faith (and argue that it is politically biased in support of Labour). Again, the text positions the group to focus almost solely on blasphemy, associating only Muslims with the new laws:

'The article is about a law brought about because somebody wrote a book criticising the Muslims' religion.' (female)

The group support and propose anti-discrimination laws as an alternative, that this is what the article is based on is obscured to them:

1: 'I think that's completely ridiculous because now what you are saying is that Christianity is superior to other religions.

You are saying Christianity is right but other multicultural religions are less so you have to get rid of all the blasphemy laws altogether'.

2: 'why can't you have just a discrimination law?' (agreement). (males)

They are positioned by virtually every aspect of the text; that the law is outmoded, unworkable (giving the example of Northern Ireland) and that freedom of speech is of the utmost importance. Whilst it should be remembered, however, that these views are consistent with their own ideologies, an examination of their written answers shows that an initially positive response is then rejected in the light of the text's feasible arguments:

'initially, it appears a good idea-multicultural society.

Quenches freedom of speech.' (male)

'that's like they are doing it to you because you are not allowed to disagree with them....you can't disagree with them or you'll be put in prison.' (male)

'It's like in Ireland, it says here that they've had the law or something in here and it hasn't made much of a difference at the end of the day.' (female)

However, the influence of The Rushdie Affair on this group, given their age at the time it occurred (10), illustrates the strength of the hegemonic interpretation on this issue. Their idea of the event totally correlates with media representations of it, that Muslims overreacted and the focus on the death threat. They have, therefore, a 'culturally shared model of the situation' (van Dijk, 1988a):

'It's quite ridiculous some of the attitudes people took when he wrote this book.

They just wanted him dead.

There were just scores of people wanting him dead, to just burn him alive.' (male)

'You know, you don't order someone dead just because they express an opinion.' (male)

For these non-Muslims equality is important but secondary to freedom of speech. They lack the ability to understand the importance of religion to Muslims and are 'religion-blind' in their identification of group disadvantage. Their perceptions towards Islam then are not based on hostility but misunderstanding due to limited information and a difficulty in reconciling what Islam appears to represent with their own liberal values. Their views conform with *The Guardian's* editorial ideologies which advocates fairness and equality but finds Islam in conflict with these ideologies. It is this that causes them to concentrate on race rather than religious identities:

'there's a difference between the religion and people who believe in it, you shouldn't take the piss out of people who believe in it but there is nothing wrong criticising the religion itself.'

Ethnic identification is apparent by those participants from other ethnic groups who show more sympathy for the Muslim perspective. They believe that Muslims have been

discriminated against and think the laws are probably a good idea but in this context they support their peers arguments on freedom of speech and show caution about judging others:

'it's kind of mixed feelings, I mean to me it seems silly to have like, going to jail because you happen to criticise a religion, everyone has a right for an opinion, OK what you might say might not be right but at the end of the day you should have a right to your opinion, but actually putting it in to the anti-racial law, the discrimination law sorry, that seemed like a good idea in the sense that if you've got racial and sex discrimination you might as well have religious as well.' (female, Hindu)

'I have two sides to it, its like I have the science side and I've been brought up to be religious and so I have mixed feelings.' (female, Hindu)

This empathy seems to be based on experiences of discrimination rather than religious empathy. The only practising Christian participants argue that religious believers should be able to withstand criticism of their religion and oppose the laws. This protects the privileged position of Christianity whilst appearing to be tolerant, in contrast to Muslims:

'I mean some people might mean harm by it, by slandering the Church of England or whatever but I'm not really in favour of religion all the time but (laughs), it doesn't really bother me that much at all.' (male, Christian)

The conflict of ideologies experienced by this group is all too apparent in their responses to the article on funded Muslim schools. The group is initially positioned to support this in accordance with their views on equality, particularly on reading about the provision available to other minorities. They pick up on textual factors which suggest a need, waiting lists and religious holidays. However, they also single out Ray Honeyford's quote on segregation, which is also consistent with their ways of thinking. The group therefore justify their views on integration as the preferable method of schooling on the basis of racial harmony, resolving their awkward position. Conforming to their liberal principles then, they suggest religion is a private matter but religious **education** is necessary to promote understanding. On this basis, they respond negatively to the photograph showing only girls as implying that sexes will be segregated in these schools. Other textual information is also responded to in this way such as identifying the curriculum as suggesting

a narrow education. The more right of centre members (related to newspaper readership) bring in other objections such as the cost to the taxpayer:

Underlined in text: 'to gain grant-maintained status with full public funding.' (male)

However, what are consistently reinforced are the reasons for preferring integration in attempts to reconcile their conflicting positions:

'I think it should be in state schools as well because, I think you should have schools where you have all the religions involved because keeping them segregated is going to make it worse not better.'

'I think you should be able to knock down barriers, social barriers in the country, make it multicultural rather than you know pointing directly to them, building up the barriers more. We should be striving to make people equal.' (males)

According to van Dijk (1991: 39), liberal society has developed 'norms of an ethical nature' which now 'provide the consensus boundaries of systems of ethnic dominance' and have resulted in 'moderate racism'. This is apparent in the responses of these groups who are not consistent in their expression of an anti-discriminatory ideology but legitimate this through a 'discourse of tolerance'. However, Shohat and Stam (1994) argue that people can be anti-racist whilst engaging in Eurocentric thinking (the normalising of history from a Eurocentric perspective). This could provide one explanation for these groups' responses.

Non-Contact group

These groups generally showed much less awareness and were much less informed about current affairs and political and cultural issues generally. Firmly rooted in dominant right-wing ideologies, living in a rural part of Leicester which is monocultural, they were neither the less aware that to be outwardly racist is no longer politically correct. Reactions to the texts were therefore as one might expect, positioned by both *Mail* stories by the dominant meanings and showing oppositional positioning to *The Guardian's* text (also then articulating dominant meanings). However, these groups showed a higher degree of ambivalence towards the texts, the issues of debate having less salience for them as they were not perceived as having personal consequences.

Their lack of political awareness and terminology associated with this subject meant, with the text on blasphemy, the group were forced to accept it at face value. Although they

were positioned in every way by the text and perceived it as being relatively balanced (in the representation of two sides), they did suggest it was biased in favour of Labour, to which they responded negatively, suggesting it was an example of political correctness by the Government. Only one participant had any previous knowledge of Rushdie and this memory correlated with media representations with the death threat at the forefront. The group, again, were situated by their own immediate environment, initially seeing the text almost solely in relation to Christianity:

‘not really because you don’t walk down the street and go you are C of E
so I’m going to discriminate against you but you’re Catholic so you’re OK.’ (female)

As a mainly secular group they rejected the laws on the basis of an absence of need and focused on the rights of the non-religious. They too were strongly positioned into discussing the issue of blasphemy rather than discrimination. The selection of a quote by Carmel Bedford of the anti-censorship group by many of the group, about making conversations in the living room illegal, illustrates their identification with this perspective. Freedom of speech discourse prevailed:

‘People should be able to speak about such things with others when they
are in private such as their own homes.’ (female)

‘People should be allowed the right to say what they believe (denied their
freedom of speech). An atheist wouldn’t be allowed their rights because
they’d be talking against every religion.’ (male)

Whilst they were forced by textual references to equality to admit that discrimination is wrong, these statements, like the text’s, were followed by disclaimers. Table 5.13 provides evidence that the groups deal with the issue of equality raised by the texts. In the case of the non-Contact groups however, their expressions amount to ‘pseudo-equality’ (Shohat and Stam, 1994) as they are employed in an attempt to justify their conflicting positions.

Table 5.13: An equal amount of statements are made by each group about issues of equality.

Number of text units relating to discrimination or equality	Muslims	Contact	Non-Contact
	77	67	78

This group showed less tolerance towards minorities, the problems they cause to the majority was of more concern. Muslims were therefore blamed for the introduction of the laws, and perceived as over-reacting. One participant who felt Christians would object to any change in the laws, was challenged by another who argued otherwise, in her questionnaire, the objector was shown to be a practising Christian. Participants in this group, who were more able to negotiate with the Cook text, were incorporated by the preferred meanings here, having little points of identification. Knowledge and identification with the topic is clearly important then, in being able to resist the dominant meanings.

As with the previous text, the Cook article was not recognised as ideological, and cultural bias was barely reflected upon, but in this case was perceived as sensationalist. This, however, did not prevent preferred readings. Three of the more astute members of the group felt it was biased in favour of her. These group members articulated a more sensitive and liberal attitude throughout whilst still anchored by dominant meanings. This cannot be accounted for in terms of the variables examined here, such as newspaper readership.

However, whilst similarly occupying a subject position to that of the Contact group, this group negotiated with the text on another point of difference. Being more able to speculate generally than with the previous text, knowing something about marriage and relationships, for them, age was the point of identification with Sarah which led to dissenting voices regarding the control that others took in her life (perhaps based on their own experiences with authority). However, the dominant message in the text for them was a warning to young people not to grow up too soon. In this way they accepted the text's message, relating strongly as teenagers and responded with feelings from their own specific cultural perspective, that she is missing out on having teenage fun and restricting her life:

'Yeah, she was only 14 and she was just like used to going out and having fun and everything, not being like a wife.' (female)

Dismissive of the relationship and positioned by the psychological reasons for her conversion and marriage, the bullying. One participant in particular related to these feelings which resulted in sympathy for Sarah rather than ridicule (which I was later to find out was based on experience):

'it says she was teased at school and everyone hated her and stuff so she probably thought 'oh, somebody loves me or something silly like that.' (female)

'I feel sorry for her. She craved attention, he showed it,
she grabbed it. She felt fat and ugly when people called her it.
He showed her she wasn't and she didn't want to let that feeling go.' (female)

These varying degrees of empathy generated by the text is evidence that the 'scripts' people bring to them produce differential readings. It is clear that meaning is produced through a range of salient identifications (based on social subject positions).

The group was particularly puzzled by the parents' conversion. This is a result of textual strategies, withholding explanations which leaves the reader feeling that actions are nonsensical. This group's schema on Muslims was virtually non-existent in relation to other ethnic groups. They therefore relied heavily on the text for information on this subject (despite claiming it was biased). Their perception of religion as being a series of rituals (rather than a way of life as in the Muslim faith) meant they found it difficult to identify religion in the article apart from the marriage ceremony (although they were subconsciously forming perceptions and making assumptions identified in their discussions). The photographs, however, worked as a reminder to some of representations they have seen before of girls and headscarves.

These patterns of interpretation were also prevalent in response to *The Guardian* article on the funding of Muslim schools, to which the group took an oppositional (and therefore dominant) position to its preferred meanings. They identified this text as ideological, supporting Muslims. Initially reminded by the text on the necessity for equality, rather than outwardly oppose any change to the system, they supported integration (as promoting good race relations) on the basis of disagreement with the state funding of separate religious schools from a position of self-interest (and were therefore more engaged in this discussion). Minorities (foreigners) were seen as creating problems for the majority (British), the schools considered special treatment for Muslims to the detriment of 'British' children and costly to the taxpayer. Information in the text was selected and used to support their ideologies, for example, the point made regarding the funding of other religions' schools was responded to negatively as it was seen as a signal to all sorts of religions being funded at the taxpayers expense. Religion was seen as private and unimportant, so those who do believe strongly, because they are in the minority, should pay for themselves. When presented with an alternative text, these groups work harder to justify their ideology. They 'rationalise' their racism, which Cohen (1988: 82) argues is a strategy that emphasises their

own tolerance whilst negativising the Other, therefore protecting white privilege, and 'covers over deeper forms of racism' (see also van Dijk, 1988a, on strategic discourse).

Their images of religion were limited by the type of RE they experienced at school and local media coverage based on rituals. They therefore have problems understanding the importance it can hold for others:

'I mean we come here and don't get any RE or anything like that. Everyone's got the right to their own religion, I just don't think they should have special schools for it.' (female)

When asked how much religion is covered in the news then, the response was limited by these conceptions:

1: 'not a lot, unless they are mentioning it to make a point about religion then they don't really mention it.'

2: 'I think if a festival like Diwali, they mention that and they have photos and stuff like that and they put descriptions of what happened like the Caribbean carnival and stuff like that, they always have like reports about that.' (females)

Their awareness of the controversial nature of race, whilst wanting to express their opinions, saw these couched in careful language;

'I don't know but it's just a dodgy situation isn't it, it's just the fact that Muslims didn't originate here so you think why should we be paying for extra schools for them, that's the whole issue, it's nothing about racism or anything like that//'

'Oh dear, I mean I've just had loads of experiences, I'm not racist to any other culture apart from Pakistan I suppose which is really awful but the experiences that I've had like you're in town and there is a whole group of them pushing past you (yeah) they're really ignorant pushing past you.' (females)

The 'Oh dear' here illustrates how the speaker is aware of the difficulty of expressing her feelings without appearing too racist and tries to depoliticise the racism by denying it. The apparent consensus is evidence that these attitudes have been normalised amongst this group, these adaptations are therefore probably for the benefit of the outsider.

One participant was especially keen to try and articulate another side, not wanting to appear overtly racist, but ultimately agreed with the group. Another showed a more sympathetic side to Muslims, identifying and recognising their discrimination. His discourse revealed that cultural proximity is a factor, living in central Leicester, mixing with some Muslims. His parents are also *Guardian* readers and it is likely some of these values are transferred.

In the following sections I examine the interpretive strategies, including the frameworks of understanding that these participants use in their comprehension and decoding of media messages which result in the formulation of shared interpretations.

Cultural Proximity

It is evident that cultural proximity is an important variable for Muslims in the form of religious identification enabling them to resist texts about Muslims even where they are culturally ignorant.¹² However, it is clear that the 'contact thesis', so often celebrated by previous research as a means of resisting dominant meanings, can be questioned in relation to Muslims. Whilst it clearly has an impact for the Contact group on the basis of racial tolerance, these participants lacked interest or knowledge in their peer's religious identities, some claiming not to know any Muslims, even when there were Muslims in their subject groups:

'I don't really come into contact with it, I mean thinking about it as much as like Christianity or Sikhism which I come into contact with more so I think about them more than I do more than, I don't think about Islam at all.' (male, Contact)

I: 'Does anybody know any Muslims?'

1: 'I wouldn't know.'

2: 'I don't know.'

I: 'you don't know?'

2: 'no, I'm not religious at all so I don't talk about anything like that.' (laughs) (females, contact)

Ignorance is clearly a key factor in the sustainment of dominant ideologies about Muslims and Islam. Unfortunately, these participants lack any depth of knowledge about

¹² It is therefore religious proximity rather than cultural proximity which is the crucial variable for Muslims. However, I continue to use this term, incorporating its wider meanings.

Islam which would allow them to reject these meanings but their multicultural backgrounds encourage them to be more critical. The media compounds the situation by limiting knowledge that may improve relations and causing people to be suspicious of Islam, thus contributing to boundary making. The consequences of this are that the issue of religious identity is not open for discussion, **in fact it is consciously avoided** as a point of dissent and awkwardness in the relationships and for the sake of maintaining harmony. This is consistent with previous research which has found that local situations are filtered through the images derived from the media (Hartmann et al, 1974). Troyna (1981) has argued that even in areas where people live and work close to one another, interaction can be limited and therefore the media remains the major source of information.

However, as with Troyna's findings, these non-Muslims believed it is their experience rather than media images which informs them about minorities. Whilst the Contact groups believed this 'experience' has made them more tolerant and anti-racist, the non-Contact groups argued that their 'experiences' (living alongside Muslims but at a distance) have given them a negative outlook. Hartmann et al (1974) also found that those living around 'immigrant' areas but who had little contact with them were often more hostile than those who did not. However, whilst 'relative deprivation' is not a factor for resentment in this case, with the non-Contact groups being wealthier than the Contact, resentment to the 'special privileges' minorities are perceived to receive which leaves them (majority) feeling disadvantaged is a key factor in the responses of the non-Contact groups here:

'definitely from speaking to people because living in Leicester, it's quite a multicultural place, you are bound to be around this sort of thing but speak to people I know in Newcastle or somewhere like that where there is hardly any different cultures, they are different in how they act towards them, you know multicultural people.' (male, Contact)

1: 'It's because we see too much of them.'

2: 'It's like we don't have Muslim kids here (at the school) but it's like a bloomin weekly thing, if you go into Leicester or anything then you just see them, it's what we've grown up with, *them around us*.'

(females, non-Contact)

The few positive experiences the non-Contact group have had are treated as unusual and one-off experiences, where individuals are separated from their racial group:

'they were sound, I mean *it was obvious like an Indian house* with all the stuff up and everything *but it just weren't a problem* at all, cos *they could all speak English*, we were eating their food and having a laugh with them, playing football with the daughters and stuff like that. I mean it was sound that was. It was a right laugh, it was *unbelievable*.'

(female, non-Contact, emphasis added)

According to Cohen (1988), the reference to experience, rather than external modes of influence, authenticates the racism by making it appear a spontaneous and natural response to the Other who is somehow responsible.

Ignorance is clearly an issue for the non-Contact group. These participants had very little knowledge of Islam. Their schemas are based on the little information they remember from school which includes only superficial details and things they find unusual and controversial such as Sikhs carrying swords. This often results in the confusion of aspects of different religions. Whilst this works to dispel specific images of certain groups, for example the fundamentalist, it increases antagonism towards minorities in general. They were therefore highly reliant on the articles for information about Muslims:

I: 'What do you know about Islam?'

All: nothing (laughter)

I: 'Does anybody know anything?'

1: 'Errr.. most of the stuff you see is about war in those countries you don't see anything else, other stories.'

I: 'what is your perception of Islam and Muslims?'

1: 'From the article, it wouldn't be that good for us.'

I: 'What do you mean?'

1: 'Well nobody, when you have had the kind of life you have had here, wants to go to some foreign country and treated like a slave do you?'

2: 'and having to walk round with that thing around her face, a a thingy' ... (laughing)

I: 'Does anyone know anything else about Muslims?'

3: 'Are they the ones the wear Turbans or is that Hindu?'

I: 'Sikhs'

3: 'OK' (Lots of laughing).

'You tend not to take much notice of any other religion than the one

you are supposed to be or if you are just not religious you don't really take much notice of any religion.'

2: 'They all seem the same to me, Sikh, Muslim, Hindu people whatever but they are probably not, I don't know so'...laughs.' (male and females, non-Contact)

Familiarity with Media Coverage

To identify familiarity with other media coverage of Islam, I felt, may provide an indication as to what else was informing these participants about it. Despite some contradictory spaces in press discourse, the content analyses found the existence of dominant meanings in relation to Islam. This was particularly apparent at the time in coverage of the Saudi nurses.¹³ The level of saturation and recency of this coverage meant it was known by most of the participants although their differing interpretations are revealing:

'It's like, if somebody goes to another country, they have to abide by their laws and if they don't, they have to pay the consequences and they knew, nobody knows whether they were guilty or not guilty, but if they knew that the Saudi government was like this and if they done something the punishment was really fierce so you have to consider everything.' (Muslim, female)

'yeah but the fact that the issue is that these women were, you know, there seems to be little if any evidence against them which matters and they were tortured for their confessions and that was part of their society and that has been highlighted by this case.' (male, Contact)

'Now that gives you a negative opinion of Muslims full stop, about them like keeping them in jail, doing this and that to them, you know, I don't know. The thing is though, you don't take into account that it is a totally different culture, that's normal for them to do stuff like that.' (female, non Contact)

The subjects are positioned according to their social/cultural identification with a particular 'side'. All subjects are positioned to attend to the issue of Saudi punishments but whilst the non-Muslim groups' discourse reflects dominant press discourse, the Muslims try to mitigate for the Saudi authorities.

¹³ At the time coverage was fairly consensual, only after the nurses sold their story to one paper did coverage diversify.

Actual familiarity with the news stories presented to them in these groups was poor, even amongst the Muslims who, in common with previous research on minorities and their perceptions of media representation, despite having clear theories on the hostility of the media, could only provide general examples of this. The Rushdie Affair was, however, salient amongst the Muslim and Contact groups, an indication of the notoriety of the story in the UK.¹⁴ Table 5.14 shows the total recall of news stories on Islam. Research on news recall suggests that people have difficulty remembering news items but are most likely to remember what is salient with their own views (Dahlgren, 1988; Troyna, 1981). It also likely to illustrate stories to which the media gives prominence, the meanings of which then gain currency in society.

Table 5.14: News stories recalled by different groups.

Associated topics	Muslims	Contact Group	Non-Contact Group
Fundamentalism	Oklahoma	Nation of Islam	Oklahoma
Conflict	World Cup threat	Luxor	
	Pakistan hostages	Israel/ 'Arabia'	
	Middle East	Saddam Hussein	Vague notion of foreign wars/conflict
	Afghanistan		
Conversion	Bosnia		
	Jemima Khan		
	Mike Tyson		
	Muhammed Ali		
UK	Cat Stevens		
	Pigs in the Window	Schools (local)	Pigs in the window
	Schools		
Primitive	Prince Charles		
Ethnicity	Saudi Nurses	Saudi nurses	Saudi Nurses
		Norman Tebbit	Sikhs and sword carrying
		(multiculturalism debate)	Animal sacrifices

Knowledge of events reflects the groups' general levels of cultural and political awareness in this area with the Muslims having the greater knowledge (as with Price and Zaller, 1993). Non-Muslims not only have a patchy knowledge but also remember events which were negatively framed in the press and are dominated by conflict, aggression and irrationality.¹⁵ Although most events are fairly recent, it illustrates how events like the Oklahoma bombing remain in the collective memory even if an association is made (and fits

¹⁴ Some Muslims *had* seen coverage of the funding of Muslim schools and some of the non-Muslims-the Cook story. This is likely to be based on the salience of the stories for the groups.

¹⁵ Although this may also be a reflection of actual media coverage. Muslims too remember negative events due to their own political consciousness.

with preconceptions) but is unjustified. It is this culture of ignorance that fuels negative perceptions of Islam.

It is also of note that the variable 'interest in the news' does not seem to have any bearing on familiarity. Those who claim to be disinterested are just as likely to be familiar with events as those who are interested. However, this variable is measured only by self-identification. Both context therefore, over-estimation and underestimation are influential factors. Also measured were statements of interest and disinterest towards the stories discussed in the groups. The level of disinterest (Table 5.15) is not only a reflection of age but relevance which would account for the level of recall.¹⁶ However, I would argue that levels of recall are not an accurate reflection of the way media discourse enters and circulates in society. Whilst actual events are easily forgotten, meanings are continually produced and reproduced across stories.

Table 5.15: Statements of interest made by participants in relation to texts examined.

	Muslims	Contact	Non-Contact	Total
Interest	29	3	2	34
Disinterest	39	36	95	170

The attitude of this participant was reiterated by many non-Muslims:

'Not particularly concerned with this issue, as it is not something that personally affects me, neither will it really affect me to any major degree.' (male, Contact)

It is an indication that even those who mix regularly with ethnic groups perceive ethnic issues as something separate to the lives of the majority; 'minority issues'.

The lack of engagement by Muslims, despite their interest in their representation, was partly based on their age and distaste for these stories but also the lack of relevance in the foreign element of stories. The articles solely about British Muslims were therefore found to be most interesting, with a gender differential. The females preferred the education article on the basis of faith and the males the section on Rushdie based on politics, although they expressed a desire to see the story dropped given its age. It was evident that the intentional formatting which causes people to feel distanced from the main actors (Muslims) and therefore unsympathetic towards them also had some effect on the Muslim groups.

¹⁶ Despite my efforts to encourage engagement by choice of articles. This had some level of success with the Cook article amongst non-Muslims. This article, however, was held to be the less interesting (and most distasteful amongst Muslims).

Attitude to Religion/ Other Religions

By examining the participants attitudes to religion in general and other religions, I felt, would not only provide an insight into the frameworks of knowledge of groups which may affect their interpretations, but provide a comparative point to feelings about Islam. As might be expected, the non-Muslims' attitude to religion was one of secular privatisation, this position held most strongly (as an ideology) by the Contact group. The non-Contact group were less tolerant and religion was just 'unimportant'. However, whilst the Contact group espoused a 'live and let live' philosophy, this appeared to be only on the basis that it had no personal consequences for them:

'It doesn't bother me in any way providing everyone stays to themselves and don't try and infringe on your liberty, you know, do what you want, it doesn't bother me.' (male, Contact)

'Yeah, it's like one religion has to pray about six times a day or something towards Mecca and you don't really want that if you are working on a production line or something because you can't stop the production line for them to pray.' (female, non-Contact)

In contrast, religion is extremely important to all the Muslims. An illustration of this is that initially and similarly to the non-Contact groups, the first male Muslim group did not take the activity seriously. However, the participants became very serious when we began discussing Islam. Muslims believed that although society is becoming more multicultural, it is dominated by Christian norms. However, the average Briton does not take their religion seriously and this is at the heart of many problems in society. To them, this is why Islam is perceived to be a threat, its strength and growth. Increasingly, researchers are finding religion to be a more significant source of identity than ethnicity for young Muslims (Jacobson, 1997; Knott and Khoker, 1993; Modood, Berthoud et al, 1997; Nielsen 1987), (explained more fully in the conclusion to this chapter).

This was in contrast to the other religious groups to whom their religion mattered little. Despite this, they had some empathy towards Muslims based on an ethnic identification but *in this context*, they identified more with the values of their non-Muslim peers (Table 5.16). The lack of empathy with religion by non-Muslims clearly contributes to their interpretation of the texts which is exacerbated by its presentation within them.

Table 5.16: Statements made about Islam by other religious groups.

	Sikh	Hindu	Christians	Total
Positive	5	1	6	12
Negative	56	8	25	89

The participants lacked knowledge about the representation of other religions in the media partly due to lack of interest and possibly due to an absence of coverage. Generally, and consistent with previous research with minority groups, Muslims felt that their religion was the most poorly represented but it was likely that all religions were badly portrayed (due to a secular press):

‘yes that’s true as well, like when Rushdie wrote about the Muslims and Islam, like it took centre stage again all the press were covering it. Recently he wrote about Hindus and his book was banned in India but nobody heard about that.’ (male Muslim)

However, other ethnic groups lacked knowledge about coverage of their own religions but felt that it was unlikely that they were covered much:

‘I haven’t seen any other religions in the paper to be truthful, I haven’t seen any Hindus in the paper and our religion’s definitely never in the paper.’ (Sikh female).

Local coverage of minority religions was considered to be positive:

‘if you look in the local papers it has got quite a lot of a mix of religions, I mean because in this community there are quite a lot of Asians, you do see a lot of stuff in the local newspaper.’ (Hindu female)

Non-Muslims felt the media was probably biased against all religions, less so against Christianity (due to societal norms) but there was also an absence of coverage in the national press. However, the non-Contact group did not question this (poor) representation as a false one. Generally, non-Muslims were indifferent to other religions which is in contrast to their severe criticism of Islam. Muslims, however, expressed some antagonistic attitudes to other religions but were reticent to do so in this context. They were therefore generally evasive but more willing to criticise Christianity as to them it represents the central starting point of their persecution in the West and was seen as hypocritical in its judgements against them:

'yes, there has always been a kind of a feud between Muslims and Jews but I don't think he should just talk about killing just like that.'
(words stilted) (female, Muslim)

'The article would make me think about:..... how many leaders of great religions (Christianity) are backing certain people and allow discrimination against other religions.'
(Muslim male)

'I don't think they would allow a Muslim guy to write about the Christianity in the way he (Rushdie) wrote about Islam anyway.' (male)

This provides some insight into the frameworks of understanding of particular groups, the importance of religion to Muslims and lack of importance to non-Muslims which affects their interpretations. It is clear from just this small amount of data that Islam has more salience (for negative reasons) in the press and this is also apparent in the (critical) discourses of the public.

Media Bias

The extent to which participants were media literate was also considered an important factor in being able to resist textual meanings. The difference in the groups' awareness of cultural bias has already been made evident. Most of the participants had a genre schema for news, that generally bias exists in the media, that this is a negative aspect and journalism should be neutral. Table 5.17 shows the different levels of awareness of bias between groups and the reasons they offered for this (these are explained in more detail in the following text).

Table 5.17: Number of statements made relating to how the media is biased.

Status	Newspaper Selectivity	Commer- cialism	Bias in TV	Journalist Practices	Untrue	News Values	Interpr- etations	Tabloid sensatio- nalism
Muslim	48	9	3	132	11	59	1	10
Contact	36	5	2	42	5	82	0	4
Non Contact	17	2	9	8	0	64	0	16

	Trivialising	Knowledge of paper	Recognition of bias through other identifications; age	Perceived Media Influence	Lack of coverage
Muslim	4	26	5	6	1
Contact	2	13	7	8	0
Non contact	4	26	10	6	18

Expectations	Amount of coverage	Biased towards Islam	Unintentional bias	Total
8	5	59	0	387
0	1	33	10	250
0	0	0	0	180

It is evident that Muslims are not only more concerned with bias than the other groups but the reasons they give show a greater awareness of processes of selectivity and the journalistic practices, norms and ignorance that lead to bias. They were generally more cynical regarding the intentions of the press and were more likely to see articles as completely untrue. They were especially critical of the misuse of Islamic terminology which promotes ignorance.¹⁷ Similarly, the Contact group had a good awareness of the effects of using certain sources, structuration and use of language in articles (Table 5.18). Their awareness of news values was also high (Table 5.19). Whilst Muslims, however, used their media literacy to illustrate bias towards Islam, the non-Muslims applied it more generally (and to political bias). There were even a couple of instances where non-Muslims said the media was biased in favour of Islam, this was particularly prevalent in the groups who had the more positive article on Muslim schools. The non-Contact group's awareness of these practices was much less sophisticated (see quote):

'I think it's quite biased because they've only got the President's side of the story really, they haven't got nobody else backing it up and there is not much supporting evidence for most of these things they've said as well.' (Muslim female)

'it's just a clever editing trick that's what it is.

I see it on television all the time when you see things about Muslims, it was about Salman Rushdie again, it was about some guy asking him, a scholar, a guy asking him what he thought about Salman Rushdie and he was saying about Islam and what should happen and after he finishes talking, he says something like, 'Muslims are living in peace and harmony' and straight after he finished there is a picture of Khomeini and then back to the conversation again so it's like 'yes' yes', yes but on the other hand it is like Khomeini wants to kill everyone.' (Muslim male)

¹⁷ Yet they too show a degree of ignorance regarding other cultures, religions and appropriate terminology, one Muslim referring to '*Christianism*' in society.

- 1: 'it's got conflict between laws, conflict between countries as well potentially.'
- 2: 'yeah, it's got a lot of sensationalism in it like, you've got the 18 and 13, you've got the western and the Islam bit, so it was interesting but this comes a long way after the real story doesn't it?'
- 3: 'I don't think there would have been such a problem with this, with the age gap if the guy hadn't been from Turkey and Muslim.' (males and females, Contact)
- I: 'Why do you think newspaper reports portray it like that?'
- 'they are trying to make you feel SORRY for her as well.' (male, non-Contact)

Table 5.18: Number of statements made in relation to different types of journalistic practices which cause bias.

Status	Journalistic Practices: general	Presumptions Interests (of own group)	Editing, format, sources, lexical choices	Inserting irrelevant material	Total
Muslims	10	73	46	3	132
Contact	1	9	22	0	42
Non-Contact	0	1	7	0	8

Table 5.19: Newsworthy aspects of the texts according to different groups.

Status	News Values: general	Conflicting Values*	Space Filling	Sells Papers	Bad news	Good news	Target Audience
Muslims	4	15	1	9	0	0	0
Contact	17	15	0	3	5	1	1
Non Contact	10	27	0	6	6	3	0

Status	Elitism	Sensationalism	Morality	Religion	News cycle	Total
Muslims	6	22	0	0	2	59
Contact	0	29	6	5	0	82
Non Contact	0	12	0	0	0	64

*Only Muslims can could give reasons for the appeal of conflicting values.

In terms of general bias, there was only a small difference between the groups, all stating with a vengeance that the media is biased. However, this reaction seems to be based mainly on schemas relating to the tabloid press: a type of journalism based on hyperbole, sensationalism and commercialism which remained quite abstract from the texts in hand and a standard response, particularly amongst the non-Contact group. Only a couple of individuals suggested that the broadsheets are biased. All groups stated in some form that these types of articles were not news but 'stories', news was perceived as predominantly hard news appearing in broadsheets and on television. This did not stop them applying generalised 'facts', retrieved from the articles, to/about Muslims:

- 1: 'what you read in the paper's, you can't trust a word of it.'
- 2: 'I think that definitely.'

1: 'right the way through the paper to the sports news at the back,
it's all rumours and lies/' (males, Contact)

I: 'Do you think newspapers are biased?

All: 'OH yeah definitely'.

1: 'and if they've got an opinion, they'll put that forward and not
really consider the other side.'

2: 'Definitely yeah. The tabloids are anyway.' (females, non-Contact)

Despite this belief in bias then, most of the non-Muslims felt that the articles contained the basic facts and an accurate reading of the event can be made by ignoring the sensationalism:

'you see if you're interested in it, you just have to read through
and get your own opinion and just ignore all the phrases and things.
You know, because it's obviously going to be hyped up in any paper.' (male, Contact)

Yet differences occur in the belief that the media is biased against Muslims. All Muslims believed that the media was biased against them. This was a negative expectation (part of their news schema) which they brought to the texts, affecting their interpretations of articles:

'I wouldn't read it at all. I would just look at that word 'Moslems' and just think
stereotyped Muslims and think it was probably something about war and leave it.'
(female Muslim)

The Contact groups conceded that the media is probably biased against Muslims but felt that this is probably unintentional and to some extent justified, being realistic representations. However, the non-Contact groups felt that there is not enough coverage of Muslims in the media for it to be biased. This is likely to be an illustration of both their general lack of interest and awareness of cultures and ethnicity, and a reflection of the papers they read (mainly lower tabloids).

Whilst this provides evidence that groups are differentially predisposed to the news, having different expectations of the genre, expectations or awareness of media bias does not appear to make a difference in rejecting dominant meanings of Islam within specific articles. The strong consensus that the media is biased may be partly a result of the group effect whereby there is general pressure not to appear naive.

Media Literacy

As awareness of bias did not seem to make any difference in readings of Islam, I decided to examine media literacy in more depth. It is the most media literate that are aware of the papers' structures, formats and political biases. From this research, the most media literate (measured in terms of awareness of presentational factors and accurate perceptions of the paper) are most likely to be broadsheet readers, particularly *Guardian* readers, read the news on a regular basis and claim to be interested in the news (Table 5.20, 5.21). Being a Media Studies student, amongst these participants, does not seem to make a big difference. Because it is mainly the Muslims and the Contact group who fit into these categories, they are the most media literate.

Table 5.20: Media Literacy by media usage (highest number is the most literate)

	Everyday	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely
Awareness of editing	9	19	5	4
Perception of paper	13	26	12	4
Total	22	45	17	8

Table 5.21: Media Literacy by interest in news.

Media Literacy	Interested in news	Sometimes interested	Not interested
Aware of editing techniques	27	5	3
Accurate perceptions of paper	42	8	7
Total	69	13	10

Males show a much higher degree of media literacy than females (Table 5.22). Although, this is also a reflection of the higher degree of males in the Contact group and high degree of females in the non-Contact group. It is safe to say that in the mixed groups gender is not the crucial variable. Males and females show an equal awareness in the Contact group and lack of awareness in the non-Contact group. However, there is a big difference in awareness in the Muslim groups. Males here certainly showed a much greater awareness of the media and political issues in general. According to van Dijk (1988b), having a news schema aids comprehension of news texts. This may be one factor in the lack of recognition of the preferred meanings in texts of females.

Table 5.22: Media Literacy according to gender.

	Males (all)	Females (all)	Muslim males	Muslim females
Editing	31	24	19	14
Perception of paper	64	30	51	11
Total	95	54	70	25

Whilst media literacy appears to have made no major differences in the perception of Islam, it does, however, affect the critical ability to deconstruct texts. It is therefore considered of importance alongside information about Islam in countering negative images.

Interpretive Strategies

Frameworks of interpretation are based on 'scripts' which include direct experience and knowledge, media and cultural norms. As well as the 'scripts' they bring to texts, this research shows that readers pay attention to the macrostructure, headlines, labelling, lexicalisation, semantics and visual cues to make sense of the articles.

Having analysed the surface structure according to their own frameworks of understanding, the participants used aspects of the text to both illustrate textual bias and to provide evidence for their claims. That Muslims use textual references mainly as examples of bias towards Islam is further evidence of their asymmetrical position in relation to the texts (Table 5.23). Forty-three of these references are attributable to males which again shows their greater media literacy compared to females. The male group showed particular distaste for Rushdie by drawing on his face and writing abusive comments by it. Muslims do use textual references within the preferred meaning if they are symmetrical to their views, for example, quotes which support the blasphemy laws:

'I mean, the person mentioned in here, Dr Hammed, he thinks it's positive as well and all the evidence given here suggests it is positive.' (female Muslim)

Non-Muslims, particularly in the non-Contact groups, having views which are more symmetrical with the articles, are more likely to make meaning 'upwards' from the text rather than 'downwards' to it (Corner, 1991). They therefore use textual references as evidence to support their views. This shows the greater media/source dependency of these groups for information. It is also evidence of selective perception, that readers select quotes from sources which support their own readings of the text and pay attention to things that fit with group schema (as found by Taylor, 1981, van Dijk, 1987).¹⁸ This is particularly

¹⁸ Selective perception here is not seen as an individual process but based on situational factors.

evident in the non-Muslims' reading of *The Guardian* text on schools where they use information provided to raise doubts.

When using references to show awareness of bias amongst the Contact group, this is largely political bias. However, the less awareness of bias these participants have of a particular article, the more likely they will be positioned by their sources. Rhetorical devices, syntactical and semantical organisation clearly exert constraints on meaning when readers do not have the alternative information (i.e.) are not socially situated to reject preferred meanings:

'she doesn't look that mature in the pictures either.

I mean the one with the husband's family, the bottom one, she just looks like a kid and has no idea.' (female, Contact)

'I think it (Muslim schools) will be very emm, if you read the article it says, you know they are being taught the Koran and stuff and it's going to be very orientated towards that religion and perhaps they are not going to be given a fair idea of what's going on sort of when they get out of the school then they are going to have to live in the real world with other people from other cultures and if they've totally been brought up to that culture then they are going to be shell-shocked when they get out.' (male, Contact)

1: 'A clever editing trick there, it's on one line and then they've got 'the answer is to repeal all blasphemy laws', the last sentence of the article and they've got Mr Salman Rushdie smiling over here, 'Defender of all faiths', Mr Salman Rushdie.' (male Muslim)

Table 5.23: Use of textual references (evidence) by different groups.

	Muslims	Contact	Non-Contact
To show awareness of bias	56	27	1
To support arguments (in favour of dominant meanings)	2	48	44
Total	58	75	45

The evidence here supports other research which shows that semantic processing often takes place on very little contact with the text (van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b). A glance at the headline may be all it takes for a person to decide whether it is of interest or relevance to them which affects a decision to carry on reading. If there is some ambiguity, a glance at the picture or highlighted text qualifies this:

- 1: 'I'd just usually read the headline and then turn the pages.'
- 2: 'it's just the title and the way it is set out and the picture, it's like/'
- 3: 'oh, it's a Muslim there, Ill read it,'
- 4: 'yeah, the first thing you see if you see an Asian on the newspaper or the news you always get interested and read it or listen to it you know.' (Muslim females)

'I'd read the things in big print like 'I feel like an old woman not a teenager' and the bits under the photograph but if none of that's interesting, I probably wouldn't have read it.' (female, non-Contact)

It is likely, due to the level of interest non-Muslims have in these texts that only a skim reading would take place, in which case, it is likely that they would be taken at face value. It is in the re-reading and studying in a critical context such as this that texts become ideological to them. However, it was evident that even in re-reading, participants selectively absorbed parts of the text, just enough for it to be meaningful to them:

- 1: 'well there was the sex abuse.
I think that was dragging her back to the honeymoon.'
 - 2: 'and he did take her to Turkey.'
 - 1: 'I thought she just went over there and just stayed there.'
 - 2: 'I don't know.'
 - 3: 'It doesn't really say. It doesn't make the facts very clear does it?'
- (Contact group, male and females)

As an example of the cognitive processing of media texts, there is evidence in all groups of misreading the article (as above). This further indicates that people skim for the information they need for a general impression and then fill in the blanks with what is most appropriate to their view of the event. These details tend to be in line with the preferred meaning of the article and thus do not provoke any challenge but confirm it all the more. For example, some of the non-Muslims believed that Musa had forced Sarah to go back to Turkey.

Having established that the media was biased, what was the perceived influence of the media according to these groups? The Muslim participants overwhelmingly believed that non-Muslims are influenced by negative media coverage of them, that media coverage is partly responsible for negative attitudes towards them and that, once formed, these attitudes

are difficult to change. The females also showed concern about the impact of this sort of coverage on believers, leading to a loss of faith. This, they suggested, was due to the lack of understanding of Islam, the amount of coverage and size of tabloid readerships but they also acknowledged the likelihood of a lack of interest by non-Muslims in Islam. None of them considered that the media may influence them in any way.

Whilst non-Muslims rejected the idea that they were influenced when asked directly (due to the insignificant amount of coverage and a belief that experiences count for more), in the discussion, they often referred to the influence of particular stories on their attitudes.

Only Muslims, then, awarded any importance to future counteraction (Table 5.24). Training to deal with ‘ignorance’ and ensuring more access for (knowledgeable) Muslims to the media so Islam can be presented ‘properly’ were offered as possible strategies, although they also expressed some scepticism about the ability to affect change. The Contact group on the other hand made proposals for more action on discrimination, for tolerance and equality but no practical ideas for the media. As it is evident from Table 5.24, there were no proposals for change from the groups with no contact.

Table 5.24: Number of statements made about necessary future action.

	Muslims	Contact	Non Contact
Future Action	23	5	0

Demographical Details Revisited

Religion, ethnicity, language groupings

Proximity to, with knowledge of Islam has proved to be the most important variable in relation to these articles. However, to ensure that other factors were not impinging on the results, other variables were tested and accounted for. The importance of religious identification amongst the Muslims in these groups appears to have overridden differing ethnic and language groups, holding as they did, virtually a singular perspective in relation to these texts (although only a small amount outside the majority ethnic grouping participated due to the intention of encouraging homogeneity and one could argue that they have similar reference points being all ‘British Muslims’ at the same age and level of education). This was not the result of a consensus effect but was clearly illustrated by strongly held views. Even those Muslims who reported their first language as English argued just as strongly (in contrast to previous research findings, although again only a small sample here). Religious identification was not a particularly important variable for

other religious groups. A Gujarati speaking Hindu of Indian extract had very different opinions to a Gujarati Muslim of Indian extract. In relation to these articles, it was the 'Muslim' identification that was most important in resisting the preferred meaning.

Media usage

Whilst media usage bears no relation to being able to resist dominant meanings of Islam, there is a correlation between media usage and how far a person is informed and aware of current events.¹⁹ The views of the participants also correlate closely with the newspaper they read (see Footnote 19). Readership of alternative newspapers such as the *Socialist Worker* was also a good indication of the views of the reader. However, the single *Muslim News* reader did not show any higher critical awareness than her fellow Muslims.

Media usage, in terms of frequency of use, does not alone provide an indication of those who are more likely to be informed, choice of newspaper is also significant. Those who choose broadsheets are more likely to be critical and aware of current issues. They are more likely to be interested and seek out the news frequently. This applies in both the Muslim and Contact groups, with *Guardian* readers being the most critical (there are no broadsheet readers in the non-Contact groups). Participants who report an interest in the news and read regularly but choose tabloid papers are considerably less informed, with *The Mail* and *Express* readers slightly more informed than the lower tabloid readers. There are exceptions to this, such as individuals who report having little interest in the news being more astute. There seems to be other reasons for this awareness, they do Media Studies, listen to the radio a lot or their parents read a more informative paper (indicating the values of the parents). Those participants who report to have little interest in the news, rarely read newspapers or only tabloid papers in combination have the lowest political awareness. However, none of these variables appear to make much difference in rejecting dominant images of Islam within their groups.

These results provide evidence for Lacey and Longman's (1997) cultures of understanding, (the concerns, interests and values of a group or through which it understands the world) as interpretative communities shared by newspaper readers. In their own research on environmental coverage and public understandings of it, they found some newspapers have a strong relationship with their readers through which they are able to

¹⁹ A finding consistent with research on media exposure and attitudes to race (as derived from the media) (Hartmann et al, 1974; Troyna, 1981).

build 'cultures of understanding' on particular contemporary issues. 'Cultures of understanding' are particularly useful as they show a newspaper's power in sustaining selected cultural items and manipulating differences, having a captive and trusting audience. If our own newspapers are instrumental in defining reality for us, we are then more likely to reject the discourse of others if they disagree with the discourse of our own.²⁰ Having read this theory, I would suggest that these interpretive groups showed strong 'cultures of understanding' of Islam in relation to readership. The Contact group's discourse resonates with the (various but limited) discourses of broadsheet/middle tabloid papers and the non-Contact group's, the lower tabloid 'cultures of ignorance'. For the non-Contact group then, as well as being limited in their capacity to express their understandings of a media text by their historical and social situatedness, (MacGregor and Morrison, 1995), the discourse needed to effectively criticise is not made available to them (apparent in the ignorance of key terms) which prevents them from engaging in democracy. The 'culture of idiocy' promoted in *The Sun* is reflected in the dynamics of these groups who treat the issues lightly. The lack of coverage of the Other in these papers contributes to their sense of Otherness, apparent in the responses of the non-Contact groups, and this increasingly marginalises their place in society (Campbell, 1995). Whether this (cultures of understanding) is a determinant of variant readings needs to be tested by future research.

The range of interpretations, then, are based on different socio-demographic anchorings. However, these variations make little difference in formulating a negative understanding of Islam amongst non-Muslims.

Reflexivity/ Group Effect

In the interests of reflexivity and validity, I felt it was important to examine the effects of the research context on the dynamics of the groups involved. I therefore also coded data for any examples of 'group effect' and implemented discourse analysis on the results examining the interactional functions of language (Dickerson, 1996; Gill, 1996; Jensen, 1991; Lindlof, 1995; Potter, 1997). This included identification of strategic moves and evidence of role schemas (behaviour in particular situations, Höijer, 1998); examining

²⁰ Shared socio-economic factors result in the choice of certain newspapers. However, these newspapers then defend and maintain the myths of particular groups and deride the myths of others, enticing other people into readership by making the news available within a 'cultural idiom' acceptable to them (Bailey, 1977). Lacey and Longman (1997) argue that it is not a question of whether papers print what readers want to hear or shape public opinion, they do both by building on existing prejudices and exacerbating them.

the context of pauses, silences, the syntactical structure of sentences, the speed and tone of the voice; the use of repetition and disclaimers; measuring caution, levels of investment in the issue and the emotional level of group; and looking for signs of uncertainty or disagreement through body language and vocal expressions.

It is evident from this data, that there were effects on:

The researcher's presence: groups were inhibited in expressing explicit or controversial views in front of me. This 'selective disclosure', (Jourard, 1964) relates to the image people want to project of themselves, their 'public self'. Muslims were keen to present a balanced face of Islam and non-Muslims to appear tolerant and not overly racist. This often took the form of another intervening in discussion to avert controversy; making third party statements, the use of 'uncertainty tokens' (I don't know) (Potter, 1992: 106) as an avoidance technique in the face of difficult or awkward questions (including challenges from other individuals) or the use of 'or something' to buffer the answer's impact. Vagueness and lack of commitment to an answer also worked to this effect. One example of this was when a female Muslim experienced tension between her conception of *jihad* and the press representation but due to her lack of knowledge of Islam abroad preferred to avoid the question for fear of 'saying something against Islam'. Females engaged much more in these practices, especially Muslims who were more conformist, wishing to gain the approval of both myself and their friends.

There are a few examples of where I took on a teaching role when it became necessary to explain aspects of the subject which were not understood by the group such as specific terms and history. This had a positive effect in diffusing power relations, making the process more reciprocal and building trust (See Burgess et al, 1991, Glaser and Strauss, 1967 who address this concern in their research). Whilst this could be seen as influential on group responses, it is also information they may come into contact with and act upon in the normal process of interaction. Sometimes, alternative views that I put forward led to changes in position by the subjects. Discourse analysis not only enabled me to identify statements made to this effect but to expose underlying meanings. For example, the language of the non-Muslim groups is exclusive, revealing their preconceptions. Any context specific discourse which could not be validated elsewhere was therefore discounted.

Group Effect: There are a few examples of individuals 'changing positions' or contradictions in their responses. This may be a result of the redefinition of meaning

through interaction and an illustration of the fluidity of meaning but was also accounted for by group effect (consensus building). Comparing the pre-group written texts to expressions made within the group increased identification of this outcome. By looking at the overall output of the individual, the consistency of their responses and in what circumstances they changed their mind, it was possible to get a genuine (as far as possible) reading of their opinions.

I also measured for group effect by comparing the groups which were carefully controlled with groups where category participants became mixed. In mixed groups (where a non-Muslim joined a Muslim group), the dynamics were different with more interruptions based on disagreements and challenging behaviour. In this kind of group situation, the disagreeing parties initially agreed and then challenged their partner. This functioned to make interaction run more smoothly and as a way of calming the situation. It also gives the appearance of being more open-minded, taking on other people's views:

- 1: 'yes, but do you think that they follow it after converting to it?'
- 2: 'Yes, it is a matter of choice really and what you believe/'
- 3: 'yes, that's just an opinion.'

Although this did not lead to false agreement or significant changes in positions, it produced a more compromising muted response in later questions (as the participants got tired of arguing to no avail). The situation, however, silenced the Sikh member of a Muslim group who would not comment about Islam in front of his Muslim friends. In another group, the ethnic non-Muslim was more defensive regarding her religion in the face of extreme criticism by Muslims. The situation also resulted in her support for the blasphemy laws. The bulk of the evidence shows that this was the result of a false consensus effect given the strength of feeling shown in both this and other groups. This position is supported by evidence which shows that both Sikhs and Hindus are more likely to support the views of the majority on these issues. In consultation with associations throughout the country it has been found that neither communities support the extension of the blasphemy laws or state-funded religious schools (Naik, 1997; Singh, 1997). This reflects their philosophies which make them more acceptable to British majority culture in posing little threat to it.

In the Contact groups where non-Muslims with different ethnic backgrounds mix, those from the ethnic groups were more dismissive of their religion. However, they showed caution in making derogatory remarks about Muslims (there is some allegiance in their

positions as non-whites). There was also an avoidance of following issues for fear of offending each other in these groups (particularly whites against non-whites).

The consensus effect worked to monitor responses as individuals within groups showed acute awareness of what is acceptable between them, those who disagreed were often forced to back down. There was evidence of individuals that were slightly out of place in their groups who attempted to express more right-wing views (in the Contact group). These were carefully worded and required analysis to identify the hidden meanings. For example, this participant, aware of the consensus in her group, mitigates for her alternative view both before and after she says it:

‘yeah, I’m not saying it was right but if she was provoking them
and I’m not saying she was..’

However, the group effect also worked positively in that the participants knew and challenged each other when they expressed views inconsistent with previous dispositions. This could often be detrimental to discussion as, for example, in one case in the Contact group where the group regularly discuss issues. One member had a reputation for taking things too seriously which forced the others into a negative and argumentative frame of mind. This defensive attitude limited the willingness of others to get involved in another ‘discussion’. Similarly, there was pressure within the non-Contact groups to treat these ‘serious’ subjects lightly. In one group a gender dynamic also limited the discussion. However, participants were also forced to justify and explain their views within these settings.

There was also evidence of dominance within the groups-individuals attempting to steer groups onto topics (although I think this is important in identifying topics of concern) and attempts to make their views seem universal and commonsensical; ‘we all know that’.

The formal research setting was inhibiting to one non-Contact group who discussed exuberantly prior to the formal setting in which they had to be coaxed to talk. This was partly due to embarrassment. Lacking knowledge on the subject, they tried to diffuse the atmosphere with jokes and laughter. This allowed the more sensitive and knowledgeable ones to dominate which may have served to quieten some more extreme views for fear of being seen to be ignorant. However, there does seem to be a consensus given the written responses before hand. The lack of engagement and unconditional responses in this group

were also based on the perceived lack of importance of the issue to them. The group was too large and therefore some said nothing. The initial individual (written) responses offered an insight into the reasons for this and provided an idea of their understandings of the issues.

Apart from minor divergences, a consensus generally prevailed in these groups. When they agreed it becomes obvious, as they all chipped in with ideas.

Given that this context invites socially desirable responses, responses can be reasonably expected to be understatement of attitudes (Sigelman and Tuch, 1997). However, readings are also likely to be more critical given the goals of the situation. Dahlgren (1988: 292) has also suggested that 'public' situations tend to generate official discourse in their mobilisation of the participants as citizens. This does not, he suggests, match with the kind of lax viewing patterns he has observed in his own research. He, however, argues that false levels of investment should not necessarily be taken as indicating false attitudes. Rather, it should be recognised that certain contexts may facilitate the articulation of particular discourses and perspectives.

These issues should not, therefore, be interpreted as methodological 'problems' with focus groups as they represent relatively normal examples of interaction within these groups within which meanings are negotiated and produced. The roles they inhabit in these pre-existing groups are therefore considered useful and important in examining the process of meaning production.

The core findings of this chapter are as follows:

- The media appears to be an important resource on 'public knowledge' of Islam and Muslims in the UK (Corner, 1991). The media limits the framework and discourses within which Islam is 'known' but the success of the discourse is in its 'fit' with preconceptions. People are selective in the textual 'evidence' they choose to support their views. The media helps sustain dominant discourse by presenting Muslims within a framework of conflict, using categorisation to mobilise specific identities, resulting in essentialised polarised groups. Religious identifications were therefore most important for Muslims in the decoding of these texts. Other points of identification sometimes resulted in a preferred reading by Muslims.

- Non-Muslims were anchored by textual information due to a lack of knowledge of Muslims. Even groups who mix with Muslims lacked the depth of knowledge to understand and develop counter ideologies. Whilst non-Muslims argued it was their experiences which informed their beliefs about Muslims, these experiences were filtered through the media and ultimately shaped by media information.

- People who mix in a multicultural environment are more aware of issues relating to culture. These participants were sensitive to liberal ideals of equality and fairness etc. relating to discrimination and race but lacked an understanding of religious issues and held a negative perception of Islam as a restrictive oppressive religion.

- The cultures of ignorance generated by the readership and norms of the non-Contact group often worked to block out stereotypical ideas of Islam. However, the Muslims were homogenised into a negative idea of the Other, an economical and cultural threat. Although all non-Muslims engaged in 'ethnic blame discourse', this group, in particular, were fuelled by racial envy, their 'racist imagination' hyperbolizing their own disadvantage (Cohen, 1988).

- The Cook article shows how multiple points of identification operate in responding to texts. As with most texts, its meanings are multilayered and it uses a range of dominant values to position its audience. This was most effective with the non-Contact group who were the most strongly positioned within the dominant meanings, and lastly the Muslims who focused more on the cultural identifiers within the text. When non-Muslims found few points of connection in the text, discussion became more difficult.

- These groups therefore constitute 'interpretive communities' in their shared frameworks and perspectives. Apart from knowledge and cultural proximity (which also positioned Muslims in relation to foreign cultures), group norms (social, cultural and political) and media literacy were significant in the reading of these texts in addition to more traditional demographic variables.

- Whilst media literacy was important in having a critical ability to recognise, deconstruct and reject preferred meanings, this alone is not capable of producing alternative readings in relation to Islam. This depends on alternative knowledge.

- In the Muslim groups, males were more aware and interested in news and current affairs generally. Females were more restrained and keen to present a reasonable face of Islam. However, all Muslims strongly believed that the media is culturally biased. For non-

Muslims, this awareness extended to general bias mainly based on sensationalism. This awareness was not a factor in resisting ideology for non-Muslims.

- All groups were aware of the political correctness surrounding race and were careful and guarded with language, which often resulted in muted racism, but test the limits of what is acceptable in their own environment. They were already well aware of what these are.

- Our impressions of the world and our interpretations of the perceptions of others appears to be largely informed by our own immediate environment. For example, those in the Contact group thought that most people in Britain were 'not racist' and secular.

- The research context does affect responses. However, discourse analysis can overcome some of these inevitable difficulties.

Conclusion

This research provides evidence which suggests that British Muslims are 'known' to non-Muslims in the UK through the media. It is the media that defines the meaning of the Muslim presence in Britain (as has been found in previous research on the ethnic Other, Hartmann et al, 1974) and provides us with our 'ways of seeing' (Dahlgren and Chakrapani, 1988). This ideological reproduction of dominant discourses in relation to Islam does not automatically imply a passive audience, rather this process of reproduction is active, working through the social factors that audiences bring to texts (Corner, 1991). The media influences our ideas about Islam by interpreting events to 'fit' with majority or the beliefs, concerns and values of the target audience (who are, in this case, already predispositioned to an Orientalist discourse), (Lacey and Longman, 1997). Where they do not 'fit', negotiation or a conflict of interests takes place which results in rejection but contested spaces appear to be rare (amongst non-Muslims) in the production of meaning in relation to British Islam.

This news framework has been found to radically limit knowledge of Islam, structuring the terms in which the debate is seen, and restricting the discourses available to people, making the construction of alternative images difficult. Texts inform people of what is currently acceptable thinking (apparent in the Contact group's unwillingness to criticise the ethnic Other but not so Islam). The desire to show understanding and tolerance evident amongst non-Muslims (particularly in the Contact group) is an illustration of how

insensitive and limited media coverage is responsible for 'blocking' their ability to do so (Lacey and Longman, 1997).

These texts allowed a limited scope for differential decodings amongst non-Muslims, the marginal differentiation appears to reflect the contradictions in newspaper discourses which, as has been apparent, are extremely limited. According to van Dijk (1991), it is difficult for white groups to develop counter-ideologies on ethnic discourse as they do not encounter racism on a daily basis.

Those participants who were most able to reject negative representations in texts were those who had more knowledge in the subject area relating to a whole number of factors such as parental influence, political knowledge and sympathies etc. Zaller (1992) contended that knowledge is important in being critical as it provides a basis for independent thought. Most people, however, need some interpretation of events (and are dependent on this) due to the speed with which issues appear and disappear off the agenda and the lack of alternative information (Fan, 1988).

The findings of this research show that cultural proximity is an important factor for people when decoding culturally encoded texts. However, rather than knowing others, it is knowing about others which appears to be crucial. The participants with Muslim contact were able to separate the Muslims they know as friends as something different to what represents to them the 'real Islam', a media construction. This would indicate that most of their perceptions of Islam are derived from the media and illustrates the power of the media in this area to have such an impact, even where contrary evidence in the realm of personal experience exists. This is particularly so in that members of other ethnic groups shared these ideas about Islam despite their own experiences of prejudice. This is starkly illustrated by the contributions of a Sikh, whose understandings of Islam, despite being best friends with a Muslim, reflected dominant meanings. For example, whilst waiting for a focus group to commence, she showed me the front page of *The Sun* covering 'the pigs in the window' story, stating 'What does this tell you then!!!' Rather, these texts help shape meanings about Muslims by giving meaning to experience. They add to the groups' models of the situation, for Muslims, reminding them of their exclusivity position in society, for non-Muslims the threat to their own interests; the Contact groups largely their values, and the non-Contact groups, economical disadvantage. Whilst cultural proximity has proved to be important in terms of identifying with the ethnic Other, it is clearly not enough to know and mix with

Muslims. This contact must include dialogue which encourages an understanding of Islamic belief and practices to override dominant media representations.

In addition to cultural proximity, cultural (or religious) identifications are important variables for Muslims decoding media texts about Muslims. Recent debates celebrating the diasporic experience which facilitates hybridity are questionable in the light of this research which provides more evidence for the reassertion of local identities (particularism) in resistance to dominant narratives (Ahmed, 1992; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1992b; Robins, 1991; Thompson, 1995). It is argued that processes of globalisation, including the migration and displacement of peoples across borders, has allowed for the formulation and reformulation of new identities (with multiple subject positions) through the interaction of differences as traditions and boundaries are destabilised in the post-modern world (Cohen, 1997; Giddens, 1990; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1988). This is seen as a solution to the problems of an uncertain existence (Hall, 1992b). Whilst this syncretic identification (Cohen, 1997) appears to be at work for the non-Muslim ethnic subjects of this research, for Muslims there is more evidence that their real lived experience of an intercultural existence, disadvantage and marginalisation alongside cultural rejection has resulted in a disaffection for which the solution is a reassertion of religious identity. Processes of media globalisation have increased the religious identification as the inequalities Muslims suffer internationally are recognised (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994). This 'mediated consciousness' (Gilroy, 1997) has resulted in 'imagined communities' where global religious identifications override local national interests (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994; Anderson, 1983; Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1988; Sidanius et al, 1997; Werbner, 1994).

Alongside these processes, the uncertainties of the global village where Muslim are 'an ever-present ubiquitous reality' (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994) has resulted in a defensive construction of nationality, a discursive strategy to exclude Muslims by host countries (Hall, 1992b; Gellner, 1983; Woodward, 1997). In this historical trajectory, fixed, essentialist, pure identities, have been manufactured to provide ethnic certainties (Gilroy, 1997). Whilst these are imposed on the Other, nationality has become the main source of identity for the majority (Gellner, 1983). The negative expectations and meanings projected onto texts by Muslims which results in resistance is a result of this exclusion and the reality of their position in Britain in their encounters with discrimination. They pay less attention to the textual content, being immediately dismissive (particularly the males), as they experience

'cognitive dissonance' over what it means to be a Muslim (Höijer, 1998: 178). Harmony was achieved by the females through selectivity, paying attention to discourses that decrease dissonance. This 'discursive discomfiture' (Dahlgren, 1988: 297) has led to a counter-identification with religion which has restored self-confidence and strength to young Muslim communities (Harvey, 1990; Jacobson, 1997; Werbner, 1994). Although it is evident that they are not totally at one with their global counterparts, the identification based on a recognition of inequalities across the world further reduces alienation and anxieties.

Whilst it is recognised that all identities are multilayered, particularly through processes of translation, identity shifts according to the way subjects are addressed (Hall, 1992b). News contributes to the way we understand our relations with others and the power of the media is its ability to define and locate people into certain subject positions, mobilising identities, excluding and including groups of people. The emphasis on differences, constructed within a framework of conflict and a 'culture clash', whilst invoking 'Muslim' as a discursive, social category practised in these articles, has encouraged the subjects to respond as groups, exacerbating predispositions (Price, 1989; Turner, 1985). The newspapers manufacture and then exploit bounded impermeable differences which make the polarisation normative,

'Identities are produced, consumed and regulated within culture-creating meanings through symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions we might adopt' (Woodward, 1997: 2).

The unfortunate consequences of these reductive processes are evident from this audience research. Issues are presented in black and white rather than allowing identification and resolution. By concentrating attention on conflicts which seem unsolvable, it allows the real issue to be hidden and less likely to be acted upon. This is evident in the macrostructural organisation of the blasphemy article, its attention to The Rushdie Affair raises accusations of provocation by the Muslims (for employing these examples when others could be used) however, they rise to this provocation:

I: 'A clever editing trick there, it's on one line and then they've got 'the answer is to repeal all blasphemy laws', the last sentence of the article and they've got Mr Salman Rushdie smiling over here, 'Defender of all faiths', Mr Salman Rushdie.'

I: 'You think he is?'

I: 'no, that's the kind of impression I'd get if I didn't know who he

was or what he was about./'

2/ 'that he was defender'

1: 'just seeing that first just his picture, yeah, defender of all faiths.'

3: 'That's just stirring putting him there because really that's a separate article compared to this.' (Muslim males)

Social distance is enhanced as the groups take oppositional sides based on those identities mobilised. Muslims' commitment to their religious identities are reinforced and expressed through social practices and markers of difference which confirm, through experience, the media images to the non-Muslims (Jacobson, 1997). Furthermore, it increases the antagonism between different disadvantaged groups. This consolidates and naturalises both the differences and boundaries further. Hence, we witness the circularity of power, 'This cycle between reality and representations makes the ideological fictions of racism empirically 'True'' (Mercer and Julien, 1994: 137/8; see also Brah, 1988 and Hall, 1997b). Such media coverage therefore invokes social solidarity, accounting for the ethnic consensus apparent here (Anderson, 1983). This works to maintain power relations and cultural hegemony (Gellner, 1983). The 'myth of confrontation' is sustained (Halliday, 1996).

This research provides further evidence that in decoding news 'macrostructures, schemata, detailed models, general world knowledge, scripts, attitudes and perspectives and news values are the major determinants that account for variance' (van Dijk, 1988b: 159). However, these readings provide evidence that decodings are socially patterned, as these groups share the same frameworks of interpretation on this issue, based on identities mobilised in discourse. Interactions are always social as they are 'embedded in a wider system of social and symbolic relations erected on the basis of systematic inequalities' (Murdock, 1998: 205). Within the groups, the responses are not entirely homogenous and there is some evidence for diverse subject positions based on a multiplicity of identity sources. The extent to which these are activated is a sign of the media's effectiveness in its definition of the situation. Whilst these socially shared meanings seem clear cut, it is recognised that they are never static and are always being refined through the interaction of textual understandings, socio-demographic factors and personal interaction.

A case then can be made for the interpretive production of meaning from this research but does it make any difference in terms of social practice? It appears not for the

non-Muslims, for their differential interpretations results in the same consequences for Muslims-alienation and disadvantage. For Muslims, a cycle of empowerment and frustration ensues. The effects have yet to be realised by future research. However, the responses of the Contact group (to the ethnic Other) shows that, with responsible information and contact, progress can be made. On the basis of this research then, I would argue that to develop better understandings of Islam requires firstly media literacy education to promote critical skills enabling textual deconstruction, although this alone, is not enough. I have shown here that people need a greater range of information and close contact with people from different religious and ethnic groups which leads to a deeper understanding of their values, beliefs and cultures if they are to overcome negative media images.

Conclusion.

This thesis addressed questions regarding the social meanings of British Islam circulating in British society. This involved examining representations of British Muslims in sectors of the British press and the ways Muslims are known within differentially situated audience groups. It has excavated the convergences and divergences in the material (quantitative and qualitative) and the frames of expectations of the audiences, illustrating the strong consensual interpretive frameworks that exist with regard to Muslims in mainstream British society. The main findings will be reiterated here, followed by some concluding remarks and comments relating to the implications of this study.

Examining press material quantitatively revealed limited frameworks and themes associated with British Islam. However, these emerged as more detailed than their global counterparts, uncovering frameworks of interpretation that incorporated discourses relating to the more general representation of minority groups in Britain. This suggested that within a national context, salient issues relating to national identity and inclusivity take precedence in the representation of minority groups and are equally prominent in the representation of British Muslims, an argument borne out by the qualitative content analysis. That coverage of British Islam is increasing whilst global coverage is decreasing in the British press is perhaps also an illustration of this. However, coverage of British Islam still constitutes a minority of coverage on Islam in its totality. This suggests that 'Islam' continues to be interpreted as predominantly a foreign phenomena. Whilst coverage of Islam accounts for only a small proportion of news coverage as a whole, it has a greater salience than any of the other Eastern religions.

Although the volume of coverage is greater in the liberal press, this constitutes only a small proportion of the sector and given the much larger readership of the conservative press, is likely to be less significant in the dissemination of ideas about Islam. In addition, the gap in the volume of coverage between the liberal and conservative broadsheets chosen for this study is closing. In 1998 coverage of Islam (global) showed a slight increase as (newsworthy) world events took place (US air strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan targeting the activities of the 'terrorist' Osama bin Laden, and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, for example). However, this increase is greater in *The Times* than *The Guardian*, closing the gap in

coverage further, an indication of the continuing growth of the conservative framework of interpretation and attention. In any case, despite greater attention by *The Guardian* to coverage of minority issues, the convergence between the two papers in terms of their agenda, regarding the considered 'newsworthy' aspects of Islam, appeared to outweigh the differences between them. This suggests that spaces for oppositional interpretations are severely marginalised and dominated by conservative coverage in the reporting of British Islam. The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to extricate these initial and tentative theories.

The qualitative analysis addressed the discursive constructions of British Islam in press coverage and aimed to develop its repertoires of representation. This analysis showed the extent of diversity in the discourses available but also the consistency of these across the range of topics (and stories) found in the quantitative analysis. I found that the discursive variance (apart from the expected political criterion) depended on the foreign element within a topic and the nature and origins of this foreign element whereby national/ethnic stereotypes could be applied. The greater the distance of the event from the UK, the greater the essentialist construction based on ideas about Islam and the specifics of Islam within a given country, and the greater ideological consensus in and between papers. These stories were relatively consistent in their application of relevant aspects of the Orientalist discourse in its traditional, purest sense (and from a US interpretive framework). As the British aspect accounted for a greater proportion of the article, differences occurred compared to the representation of global Islam. However, there was also a consistency in the treatment of these stories. Discourses of inclusivity, economy, separatism and loyalty took prominence. Mainly based on official formulations, these articles represent the strategic discursive construction of the nation, its identity and culture, in a bid to protect this from deterioration, in the interests of the in-group and marginalising the out-group.

Although these variations represent the core images to be found on Islam in the newspapers examined here, they do not represent total coverage. Coverage was not homogenous. Differential representations not only reflected the variety of values held by different elites in British society but the newsvalues/ conventions of the newspaper forms. Hence, the volume of contested views were located in *The Guardian*, as a champion of the racialised Other in British society. However, its liberalism emerged as exclusive with regard to Muslims, its secular approach derived from the Enlightenment separation of the public

and private sphere which marginalises religion to the private. Its liberal approach to human rights further renders 'Islamic' practices irrational and barbaric. Voices of dissent, therefore, appeared mainly in the margins of the paper whilst the bulk of coverage shared the newsvalues, constructions and categorisations of its conservative counterparts.

The Sun, on the other hand, demonstrated different newsvalues. Its populist discourse resulted in Islam being 'not covered' (Said, 1981). It clearly engaged in Orientalism with regard to its foreign coverage but its Orientalist construction of the internal Other was greater than any other paper. The Other was at all times clearly delineated as 'foreign' and subject to ridicule contributing to a culture of idiocy and avoidance in the public domain. The strategic closure around this representation, which covers over any other differences in British society, has clear implications for the exclusion of Muslims from 'Britishness'.

The variation in the extremes of presentation of the papers belies a similar purpose and equally reveals more about the state of the nation than Islam. The consistency of the discourse across stories within the papers naturalises the interpretation, giving it its 'truth'. In this way the discourse is essential in the maintenance of an unequal set of power relations. Its success was measured through reception analysis.

The audience research addressed the question of whether such a regime of representation actually matters. What were the implications for coverage for those who have little contact with Muslims and for Muslims themselves. Do media themes dominate audience understandings? I found that the non-Muslims shared the interpretive frameworks of the press, expressing a predominantly conservative ideology with regard to Muslims. Equally, they shared the same differences as found within press discourses, the more liberal groups adopting the exclusive liberalism of the liberal press and the non-Contact groups expressing their conservative ideologies within a culture of ignorance.

Rather than suggest a cause and effect between press representations and audience 'opinion' (reception analysis was utilised to avoid dealing with 'effects'), however, the results demonstrate a strong correlation between the two. Given the lack of alternatively available information to these groups, this would suggest that the media contributes to the perpetuation and sustainment of a range of dominant ideologies on this issue. Whilst there is evidence of some negotiation by the non-Muslim groups, this bears little challenge to

dominant meanings and occurs mainly from a desire to present 'the best self' or stems from the multiple points of identification offered by texts.

A level of 'conspiracy theory' was demonstrated amongst the Muslims which, through experiences of cultural racism, caused them to predominantly reject the ideologies presented to them in the texts. However, it appears that the media does have a role in setting the agenda for the issues relating to Muslims which are open for discussion. How far this is practised outside a research group which specifically introduced those issues is a matter for further research. This study also contributes to the expanding body of research which shows that religious identification is of growing importance to young Muslims. The media appears to play a role in this by encouraging identification on specific levels and encouraging boundary-making amongst all groups based on binary oppositions.

It is evident, therefore, that although cultural proximity is a relevant factor in rejecting texts, this was, in this case, only partial. Religion was the central point of identification for Muslims with Muslims from whom they were culturally distant. The 'contact thesis' also worked for the Contact groups in terms of ethnic minorities to whom they showed sensitivity, engaging in a discourse of equality and anti-discrimination. However, their understandings of Muslims, which ultimately would be gathered from a range of sources involved in the reproduction of societal norms of which the media as a social structure is a part, appeared to drive their encounters with Muslims. Generating suspicion, the subject of Islam is then avoided in the encounter so ignorance is sustained. These participants 'real experience' of Muslims was therefore insufficient to break open the ideological categories formulated by the press. In fact, their experiences were used to strengthen and confirm these constructions. This was also applicable to ethnic group members from other religions who, whilst having some empathy to the discrimination felt by their Muslim friends, held similar views of them as the white participants. A general lack of sensitivity and understanding of Islam was evident. It has been conceptualised as a restrictive and oppressive religion.

The non-Contact groups, in a similar manner to the lower tabloid press, homogenised Muslims into an essentialised Other, as a cultural and economic threat. This worked to dispel some of the more persistent stereotypes of Muslims but ultimately has the same effects for them: exclusion. Knowledge, cultural proximity, group norms and media literacy were all factors in the decoding of media texts on Muslims, the consistency of

which, within the groups, constitutes them as 'interpretive communities' in their shared perspectives.

From the findings of this research, I would argue that the media, whilst not solely responsible for the perpetuation of ideologies, clearly has a central role in this. The discursive reproduction of ideas about Islam through a number of institutions that are instruments of public ideology appears to be largely effective. These ideas will continue to be promoted through the groups they inform. It is clear that the limited diversity in the ideologies expressed here both in the press and by the audiences tells us something about the problem of Muslims to British society.

I feel that this research would now benefit by contextualising its findings through additional content analysis, comparing them to coverage of Muslims who are not explicitly identified as such, global coverage, other minorities and/or religious groups, and Muslim news sources. This would reveal the political motivations in the mobilisation of different sets of political/ cultural identities (Brah, 1988).

Do these findings, then, fit with the theory examined in Chapter 1? This project supports the claims that the global image is relatively standardised. Coverage seems to fall into an international relations perspective heavily coloured, it appears, by Western/ US foreign policy dictates. Britain's relationship with America in relation to foreign policy would therefore account for these 'stable ideological formations' (Trew, 1979: 141). It also appears that there are some persistent ideas about Muslims which have also found their expression in British coverage: that Islam is static, Muslims are resistant to progress, engage in antiquated and repressive practices which abuse human rights, and often using their religion to manipulative ends. The use of specific terminology, extreme individuals, the hierarchy of access in which Muslims are unable to represent themselves is also apparent. That Islam is an alien culture with its (peoples') allegiances held elsewhere is equally evident. And it is Islam which is the prime motive for behaviour which renders social causation with a group of people and prefers a solution based on control. The resulting picture of the more rational, humane, democratic and superior host country or culture is inevitable. Equally, this representation is considered unproblematic in all but a few articles in *The Guardian*.

However, the theory does not represent the specifics of representation within national contexts where it finds a greater diversity. Nor does it take account of the

distinctions made between groups based on national/ethnic stereotypes which results in a more diverse but still limited and reductive range. The wider diversity in the frameworks of interpretation are due to local factors impinging on the representations. Britain has a very different relationship (to America) with its minorities, the established religion and ideas of what constitutes a multicultural society as well as the organisation and composition of its press. Within the UK exist different groups who have differing conceptualisations of the inclusivity of British society. The result is not only a departure from the US driven global image but diversity within the national context. Additionally, Eurocentric thinking accounts for a lack of understanding of religion and its importance to some, but also sympathy towards notions of equality. The tensions between the two results in expressions amounting to 'pseudo-equality' (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 48).

In Chapter 1, I addressed the question of the continuing relevance of Orientalism. This research shows how the discourse of Orientalism has been transcoded and transferred to the internal Other. Its central elements are used to exoticise and render the internal Other as inherently different if not ultimately 'foreign'. This has a functionality in allowing the Other to be managed and promotes a common sense of national identity at the Other's expense in order to protect and maintain social systems and structures. By representing Muslims in such a way, it absolves responsibility for including them and thus necessitating this change. The hegemony is maintained. Processes of globalisation rather than rendering Orientalism outdated (due to the demise of national distinctions) have increased the need for it in creating stable boundaries as anxieties increase. In limiting the frameworks of interpretations to containing ethnocentric ideological assumptions with strategic interests, the Orientalist discourse continues to be a contemporary force.

However, I have shown here how this discourse is not unified within a homogenous Western media and that Orientalist constructions can be resisted or negotiated with. Whilst Orientalism persists in the way we understand Islam, in a British context it incorporates a wider range of discourses, relating to minority groups and religion. What is being played out in the press is a negotiation around national cultural identity. This raises questions as to whether all minorities in Britain are treated in the same way as Muslims? And given the secular nature of the press, are all religions treated the same? Clearly not. Although minority groups continue to be problematised, explicit hostility has shifted to Muslims in the current political epoch. Ethnic minorities continue to be represented within the race relations

paradigm which excludes Muslims or the identification of Muslims. The media has closed the concept of Islam. It means only restriction, irrationality etc. When the frameworks of meanings associated with Muslims are not to be signified, racial terms rather than the category 'Muslim' are used.¹ Equally, although not dealt with systematically by this thesis, religious groups are treated by different (political, social and cultural) criterion to Islam.

Minority groups, criticising their own representation in the media often use terms such as 'mis-representation' or 'distortion'. This presupposes that there is some neutral image that could replace the distortions; questions raised in relation to 'the real Orient' and cross-cultural representation in Chapter 1. Is self-representation the only answer? In criticisms of their media representation, many Muslims offer examples of 'real' Muslims, egalitarian and observant or victimised to counter the 'misrepresentations', as with many of the Muslim writers referred to in Chapter 1 (e.g. Hassan, 1997, p. 30). Often, groups look to the specifics of their own identity, their 'experienced reality' to invalidate the media representations (Eldridge, 1991: 348). The replacement of those images identified here for another unified image would be equally unsatisfactory. What has been emphasised throughout this thesis is there is no one correct image. Cultural descriptions should therefore represent the variety of *interpretations* of Muslim life including that of the non-observant Muslim as well as the numerous interpretations of Islam across countries, sects, races etc. News does not misrepresent Muslims but reduces the rich variety of life to a simplified limited framework informed by 'Occidental cultural legacies' which are transmuted within contemporary political conditions (Caldwell, 1977: 30). The intention of this thesis has been to show what this framework looks like. Islam should not be constructed as the sole explanation for the behaviour of a multitude of different people who are unified into a collectivity through external definition.

I also raised questions as to whether the news genre had any effects on the representation of Islam. It clearly does. For example, general newsvalues are equally applicable to Islam in terms of elitism, negativity and personification (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). However, whilst it is the tendency of news to limit the public sphere, the reductive

¹ I use the term racial here as ethnic would incorporate religious belief. The press, however, often in these cases, use ethnic categories such as 'Asian' which connote a number of elements of ethnicity including religious beliefs without referring to them. This works to exoticise and delineate 'the Other'. However, religion is not referred to explicitly unless specific meanings are to be signified. The explosion of categories, their changing meanings over time and overlapping definitions is an illustration of the complexity of this issue particularly when it involves an external categorisation of 'the Other'.

and limited news frame which has developed on Islam has an additional selective emphasis based on cultural prejudices which feeds into news processes and journalistic practices. Therefore, as has been found in the coverage of other ethnic minorities in Britain, Muslims have a higher newsvalue when they are a source of problems for the white majority. Equally, Galtung and Ruge's (1965) notion of cultural proximity is significant. The more culturally distant something is to people's experience the more it has to resonate in the categories given: in other words they have to be events that capture attention particularly easily, have already entered the public imagination and fit in with a pattern of expectation. The lower the rank of the culture, the more stereotyped and unusual the event will be. It must be unambiguous. It acquires presentation in terms of 'ideal types', giving the impression of uniformity and homogeneity. A continuity effect then develops so once a channel or chain of news becomes open, the event acquires a newsvalue that can be artificial. This demonstrates the importance of examining the context of mediated issues in order to provide a valid analysis. In attending to the conventions of news, it would appear that this research provides some insight into the possible representations of Muslims in other news forms.

The competing discourses found both in the press and between the Muslim and non-Muslim audience groups in this research, represent a symbolic and real struggle for power in Britain. As Muslim groups grow more and more disenchanted by media representations and their marginalising effects, a struggle around the image is taking place. Increasingly, Muslims are becoming a more powerful lobbying force and have made efforts to create a representative body with whom the government can negotiate, and in order to provide a credible source for the media to limit the exposure of extremist groups. Hence, the formation of the Muslim Council of Britain² which appears to have been effective in lobbying New Labour. Part of this success is based on New Labour's official ideological approach to minority groups. In its submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 1995, it stated that its objective was to enable minorities to 'to participate freely and fully in the economic, social and public life of the nation, with all the benefits and responsibilities that entails, while still being able to maintain their own culture, traditions, language and values' (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b:

² Having arisen from the National Interim Committee on Muslim Affairs, this group was conceived in early 1994 and held its first General Assembly in March 1998. A brief history can be found in 'The Newsletter of the Muslim Council of Britain: The Common Good', Vol. 1, Issue 1, p. 2.

1). Whilst engaging in a rhetoric of inclusivity and celebration of the success of black and Asians, Jacques (*The Observer*, 28 December 1997: 14-15) argues that New Labour has been selective in its incorporation of groups into its idea of a new 'national renaissance'. Jacques suggests that whilst black and Asian youth culture is celebrated as providing role models, Muslims are marginalised as having no contribution to make. On this basis, I would argue that whilst New Labour has appeared to provide some spaces of participation for Muslims in its vision of a plural society, this has been little more than courting the community. Action such as the funding of two Muslim schools is a way of placating Muslims. Providing small gestures of appeasement which have little impact on the status quo quietens protest from Muslims but causes little dissent amongst the majority community, having little effect on the social structure. However, despite this, these small steps are an improvement on previous relations. Could this shift in the political landscape alter representations?³ Or will it, as Jacques suggests, lead to new and encouraging attitudes existing alongside continuing old patterns of discrimination? This article itself, a positive example of the new inclusive representation, celebrating commonalities and contributions is followed, over the page, by an article on the Middle East which discusses conspiracy theories in relation to the death of the Princess of Wales. This engages in a traditional Orientalist discourse, signifying the inherent irrationality of Muslims and homogenises Muslims by referring to a number of events to illustrate this: Rushdie, the Luxor massacre, Iran, Yasser Arafat. However, this is also a good illustration of the increasing distinction between the way foreign and British Muslims are constructed. The question is, are the more positive examples of representation equally false constructions, gestures of appeasement? And will the increasing visibility of Muslims, as they struggle for recognition, lead to a more defensive approach by those who oppose this, attempting to fix identities in the continual process of society's redefinition. Ros Coward (*The Guardian*, 11/5/99: 15) argues that there is 'unparalleled disaffection' amongst the majority population to 'the rhetoric of minority rights' which has been employed in the wake of the London nail bomb attacks. She suggests this is causing a growing resentment whereby 'ordinary people', despite adhering to the politics of equality and anti-discrimination, feel disadvantaged in relation to 'privileged' minorities. Majority groups are feeling increasingly threatened by this

³ Additionally, external events may have a role. Recent attempts by Iran to reform and liberalise somewhat under the leadership of moderate, Mohammed Khatami, may soften Islam's media image.

exemption to consensual order especially at a time of considerable ethnic and cultural demographical change. There was certainly evidence for this amongst, in particular, the non-Contact groups.

Many of the activities these Muslim groups are involved in are being ignored by the media as they continue to adopt traditional frameworks in relation to Islam. For example, a recent meeting between the Muslim Council of Britain and Labour, (6/5/99), to celebrate the contribution of Muslims to Britain was followed by coverage the next day of Mohammad al Fayed, who attended the meeting, who had again been refused British citizenship. Despite some ability to set the agenda then, Muslims continue to be predominantly interpreted within an ethnocentric framework. These frameworks have become the organising factor for representing Islam and continue to be routinely applied as coverage, so far, in 1999 confirms. This amounts to Sarwar's trial, ongoing coverage of the British Muslims on trial in the Yemen for terrorists acts, coverage of al-Fayed and one-off articles on abusive relationships, oppressive parents and barbaric rites (circumcision). Despite Muslim lobbying, as yet there is no clause in the NUJ's code of practice about religious discrimination, only racism. The relatively ineffective Press Commission's code refers only to the disapproval of 'prejudicial or pejorative' references to a person's race or religion in the expression of freedom of speech (The Runnymede Trust, 1997b: 25) Would, however, such changes have any impact given that representation takes place within an unequal set of social relations?⁴ Many media workers come from the elite groups within society and thus the ideology they reproduce is believed to be natural and common-sensical. Whilst some academics have spoken of the need for more ethnic minorities to work in the media, others believe this just leads to their incorporation within the system on the basis of learnt professionalism. For all groups to be represented fairly in the media on a democratic basis, would an overhaul of both the democratic system in society and thus other structures within it on the lines of Husband's (1994a & b, 1996) 'multi-ethnic public sphere' be required?⁵

It has been necessary for Muslims to adopt a Muslim collectivity, with the Muslim identity as central to this, to try to present news organisations with alternative information

⁴ Muslim groups argue that the commitment to the protection of Muslims by official bodies has symbolic significance so is worthwhile.

⁵ However, I hope that my own research findings can contribute to a growing body of evidence that can be used by Muslim groups to lobby the government and media institutions for policy change, ultimately promoting public awareness.

about Muslims, due to the way they are categorised in the media. Their identity is therefore both projected and imagined. Muslims are attributed with characteristics which have ideological significance within a collectivity construction. According to Trew (1979: 118), the news framework works 'cumulatively to link events of various kinds under the same stereotypes and headings and to express the perceptions as those of specific social forces or groupings'. The group categorisation is continually applied and constructed in opposition to other groups. According to Cohen (1988: 72), this constitutes a 'totalising strategy' whereby an individual is constructed as a Muslim whatever other characteristics or commonalities they may have with other groups.⁶ This renders issues of importance to the nation as specifically minority issues and promotes disinterest among the majority population. This not only limits democratic participation amongst non-Muslims on these issues but also for Muslims based on feelings of alienation thus preventing action and resolution, and keeping Muslims in their place. The conflictual framework within which different groups are constructed (which focuses on essential differences rather than commonalities) perpetuates the 'myth of confrontation', 'the clash of civilisations' which suggests that Western cultures and Islam can never get on and therefore Muslims cannot integrate, further marginalising their place in society. The media has a significant role in promoting boundary-making, naturalising and closing identity and cultural constructions. Whilst I have argued that identities have fluidity, the audience groups illustrate how people can be mobilised on the basis of common and oppositional identities as the media attempts to fix them. Addressed as groups, the Muslims, for example, made religious identifications above other levels of differentiation because of the textual categorisation. The cultural relativism practised by newspapers, expressed through the cultural clash, leads to misunderstanding, antagonism and exacerbates tension, resulting in the polarisation of groups and sustaining social relations. Social action then contributes to the 'social construction of reality' (Eldridge, 1991: 335). The narrowing of issues to binary oppositions, for example, to issues of freedom of speech or racism occurs from both the left and the right of the political spectrum. Neither of these perspectives allow for any real debate on issues such as 'how to resolve the tensions between the preservation of the

⁶ I have argued that this is a selective process in that Muslims are selectively chosen to represent the group based on the purpose of the signification but once categorised as Muslim, this dominates any other identity construction that may be possible.

distinct cultural identity of minority communities on the one hand and the encouragement of social integration on the other' (Halstead, 1988: 64).

Theories on the representation of Islam have drawn attention to a radical and explicit anti-Islamic presence in the media. The overall picture of global Islam that is produced in the media over a period of time does create this effect. However, this research has shown the gradations of difference in the representations of Islam. Binary forms of representation are more appropriate for foreign news and oversimplifies the representation of British Islam where discourse may attempt to formulate a pluralist version of the country. However, much of the global anti-Islamic discourse does enter the frameworks on British Muslims but the process is more subtle. It has to be. Not only is there a lack of conflict for the media to focus on in Britain but it is closer to people's knowledge and experiences.⁷ The underlying discourses and the way articles on British Muslims are framed (constructed around conflict) subtly transmit ideologies that over a period of time and coverage reinforces the ideologies disseminated through coverage of global Islam. It should be remembered that whilst it is possible to separate the coverage of Islam into news abroad and at home for the purpose of analysis, the picture of Muslims created in the media will be the same for both types of coverage, given that Muslims are presented as undifferentiated. The audience studies have demonstrated this. The limited coverage of British Muslims has to continually compete with the vast amounts of global coverage which continually outweigh it. A recent article introducing the Muslim Council of Great Britain in *The Guardian* (19 November, 1997), whilst fairly positive and highlighting Muslim sources, was embedded with scepticism regarding the factionalism and divisions within the Muslim community. This was located amongst seven other stories running on global Islam represented as extreme including the Egyptian fundamentalists (after the Luxor massacre), fighting in Algeria and Afghanistan, the Iraq crisis, Islamists in Turkey, a letter on Rushdie and freedom of speech, and a special report on Jordan. All these bring into question the statement from 'many prominent Muslims' in the article on British Islam, that these sorts of images are unrepresentative.

Given the strength of the representational paradigm that is 'Islam', one can assume that it has a considerable collective effect. On the basis of this research, I would argue that

⁷ This 'lack of conflict' is one of the reasons that British Islam is less interesting to the British news media.

press coverage does matter. In defining the social reality through which Muslims are known, definitions which are 'pervasive and authoritarian' (Murdock, 1998: 211), the media helps us make sense of the world and therefore has a significant role in contributing to and sustaining the social meanings of Islam. For them, Muslims are the physical, symbolic, cultural and economic threat to the institutions and fabric of British society. The patterns of representation which have been explicated through this research, despite their differences, have similar effects. They legitimise current social relations of dominance, the power structure and therefore continuing patterns of discrimination. Muslims are predominantly excluded from Britishness. The sense of mistrust, alienation and disempowerment this causes can only contribute to the hindering of positive social relations.

There is, however, some room for optimism. This research has revealed the spaces of opposition which can be worked on. The audience research illustrates the desire by non-Muslims (Contact group) to learn about and be sensitive to other cultures but media information is limiting their knowledge and understanding of Islam. It suggests that if exposed to a greater diversity of information, relations could be improved.

This data is not sufficient for making conclusive remarks about the complex process of the production of meanings. Given their multiplicity and fluidity, the meanings described here are those which have been produced within a specific time and place. The category 'Islam' is continually subject to historical and social change and its media representation will undergo similar transformations. The difficulty with audience work in interpreting meanings makes this kind of project demanding but is a necessity when examining the production of meanings. These conclusions can only be tentative, and can be put forward as providing an insight into the representation of Islam and social meanings produced within a given time and place at a specific, historical, political conjuncture. However, it provides a context within which further research can be compared, and therefore constitutes a vital part of the process within which we can build a picture of the social phenomena under study.

Appendix A:
Coding Schedule
Coverage of Islam in two national quality newspapers.
The Guardian and The Times.
 (On-line/ CD-ROM search)

1. Case Number (1-4)

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2. Date (5-10)

--	--	--	--	--	--

3. Newspaper (11)

- 1 *The Guardian*
- 2 *The Observer*
- 3 *The Times*
- 4 *The Sunday Times*

--

4. Type of article (12-13)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 01 Front page news story | 07 Letters critical of Islam | |
| 02 News Story | 08 Letters defending Islam | |
| 03 News in brief | 09 Letters: Other | |
| 04 Feature | 10 Other | |
| 05 Editorial/ comment | | |
| 06 Sports News | | |

--	--

5. Region where action takes place

(14-15)

- 01 Birmingham
- 02 Blackburn
- 03 Bolton
- 04 Bradford
- 05 Bristol
- 06 Coventry
- 07 Derby
- 08 Leeds
- 09 Leicester
- 10 Liverpool
- 11 London
- 12 Manchester
- 13 Newcastle
- 14 Nottingham
- 15 Sheffield
- 16 West Country
- 17 South East
- 18 East Anglia
- 19 East Midlands
- 20 West Midlands
- 21 North West
- 22 Cumbria
- 23 North East
- 24 Oxfordshire
- 25 Cambridgeshire
- 26 Scotland
- 27 Wales
- 28 Home Country
- 29 Other/ Mixed
- 30 None given

--	--

6. Topics

(16-17)

- 01 Islamic Fundamentalism/ fundamentalist groups
- 02 Adjustment to culture/cultural assertion
- 03 Anti-Western sentiments/ relationship with 'The West'
- 04 Belief /religious ritual/ rites/ obligations/ pilgrimage
- 05 Conversion to Islam/ from Islam
- 06 Education
- 07 Mosques
- 08 Food (ritual slaughter, halal meat)
- 09 Gender/ women/ sexuality
- 10 Freedom of speech/ attack on liberalism/ fatwas/ censorship
- 11 Islamophobia
- 12 'Crisis of faith'/ loss of control/ Westernisation
- 13 Rise of Islam
- 14 Racism/ Discrimination
- 15 Anti-racism/ equal opportunities
- 16 Involvement in politics
- 17 Relations/ compared with Christianity
- 18 Relations with other religions/ religious communities
- 19 Criminal activity/ trials
- 20 Refugees/ Immigration/ asylum
- 21 The Rushdie Affair/ Satanic Verses
- 22 Ethnic minorities
- 23 Peaceful protest/ conferences
- 24 Conflict between Muslims
- 25 Prince Charles
- 26 The Koran/ history, facts about Islam.
- 27 'Silly' stories that mock the idiosyncrasies of Islam and its culture
- 28 Marriage/Relationships
- 29 Business enterprise/ commerce
- 30 'Normal' news stories where being a Muslim is co-incidental but mentioned
- 31 Entertainment/ media
- 32 Muslim Parliament
- 33 Population
- 34 Sport
- 35 Segregation/ unity
- 36 Health issues
- 37 Cultural/ legal differences
- 38 Disturbance/ demonstrations/ unrest
- 39 Muslim community
- 40 Relations between Muslim community and host community
- 99 Other

--	--

Subtopic

(18-19)

--	--

7. References (20-23)

(Themes that are frequently referred to in association with Islam.)

- 00 N/A
- 01 Conversion
- 02 Government/ Local Government
- 03 ‘Satanic Verses’ or Rushdie Affair
- 04 Freedom of speech/ censorship/ fatwa
- 05 Racism/ Discrimination
- 06 Gender issues/ sexuality
- 07 Bradford Riots
- 08 Immigration/ asylum/ refugees
- 09 Growth of Islam in GB
- 10 Prince Charles
- 11 Muslim Parliament
- 12 Islamophobia
- 13 Anti-Western/ British sentiments
- 14 Anti-Jewish sentiments
- 15 Relations with Christianity
- 16 Relations with other religions
- 17 Islamic committees/ groups
- 18 Belief/ values/ religious Ritual
- 19 World Affairs
- 20 ‘Cultural atrocities’/ Islamic law/ punishments
- 21 Nation of Islam
- 22 Political Activism/ fundamentalism
- 23 Equal opportunities/ tolerance
- 24 Adjustment to culture/ cultural differences
- 25 Tension with the authorities/ unrest
- 26 Education
- 27 Offence caused to religious groups/ cultural insensitivity
- 28 Ethnic minorities
- 29 Muslim community/ community relations
- 30 East/ West Relations
- 31 Mosques
- 32 Relationships/ marriage
- 33 Deprivation/ deprived areas/ poverty
- 34 Population
- 35 Business/ work
- 36 Food
- 37 Politics

99 Other

8. Standing of the Principal Actor (24-25)

- 01 Head of state/ government
- 02 Religious figure
- 03 Community Spokesman
- 04 Political figure
- 05 Academic
- 06 Media industry
- 07 Media figure (celebrities)
- 08 Community members/ individual British citizens
- 09 Educational Establishment
- 10 Business figure
- 11 Political Activist
- 12 Anonymous
- 13 Committee/ group/ Body
- 14 Report with mixed actors involved
- 15 Member of Royal Family/ Royalty
- 16 Medical figure
- 17 Police/ military

- 99 Other

--	--

9. Gender of Principal Actor (26)

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Unclear/N/A
- 4 Both have equal status/mixed

--

10. Faith of Principal Actor. (if identifiable) (27)

- 1 Christian
- 2 Muslim
- 3 Other
- 4 Unclear/ None Given/ Neutral
- 5 Mixed

--

Coding form used to input data*.

(1-4) (5-10) (11) (12-13)
 / /
 (case no) (d.d) (mm) (yr) (np) (type)

(14-15) (16-17) (18-19) (20-23)

 (region) (topm) (tops) (refers)

(24-25) (26) (27)

 (actor) (g) (fth)

(1-4) (5-10) (11) (12-13)
 / /
 (case no) (d.d) (mm) (yr) (np) (type)

(14-15) (16-17) (18-19) (20-23)

 (region) (topm) (tops) (refers)

(24-25) (26) (27)

 (actor) (g) (fth)

(1-4) (5-10) (11) (12-13)
 / /
 (case no) (d.d) (mm) (yr) (np) (type)

(14-15) (16-17) (18-19) (20-23)

 (region) (topm) (tops) (refers)

(24-25) (26) (27)

 (actor) (g) (fth)

*These were double sided to save paper and increase efficiency when entering data into the computer.

Appendix B: **Coding Instructions.**

For Section 5 - Regions.

If the city is one of those named it should be coded only once and not in its appropriate county. Any city/town not named on the coding schedule should be coded in its county.

Areas should be coded as follows:

West Country:	Devon Avon Wiltshire	Dorset Gloucestershire	Cornwall Somerset
South East:	Hampshire Surrey Berkshire	Sussex Essex Bedfordshire	Kent Hertfordshire Buckinghamshire
East Anglia:	Norfolk	Suffolk	
East Midlands:	Derbyshire Lincolnshire	Leicestershire	Northamptonshire
West Midlands:	Shropshire Hereford & Worcester	Staffordshire	Warwickshire
North West:	Cheshire	Lancashire	Merseyside
North East:	Yorkshire Durham	Humberside Cleveland	Northumberland

For Section 6 - Topics.

The article is to be coded by its main topic and then by a further subtopic as follows:

- 01** Where Islamic fundamentalism or any fundamentalist group is mentioned.
- 02** Where the focus concerns the difficulties of Muslims in adapting to life in Britain and identity issues.
- 03** Any article written where Muslims are expressing anti-Western sentiments and the article deals specifically with this rather than the other topics.
- 04** An article which is predominantly about Islamic beliefs, religious rituals or pilgrimage (other the ritual slaughter of food).
- 05** Where conversion is the focus of the article.
- 06** Where education is the focus of the article.
- 07** Where the subject of mosques is the main focus.
- 08** Where food is the main topic. (If this is in relation to education, the topic which has the main emphasis is to be recorded, for example if it is mentioned in the headline. The other should then be recorded as a subtopic).
- 09** Any story to do with gender relations or focusing on women, e.g. the wearing of the veil.
- 10** Articles where the main focus of discussion is related to either freedom of speech, liberalism, fatwas and/ or censorship.
- 11** Any article which is mainly about Islamophobia.
- 12** Articles about Muslims who have either doubted their faith, are becoming Westernised or are losing it due to some other factor such as alcohol.

- 13** Articles about the growth of/ Islamic revival.
- 14** Where the main subject of the article is an incident(s) of racism or discrimination.
- 15** Any article where the main focus of discussion is anti-racism.
- 16** Where Muslims are involved in politics in Britain.
- 17** Where Islam/ Muslims and their relation to Christianity is the main focus.
- 18** Where Islam/ Muslims and their relation to other religions is the main focus.
- 19** Where a Muslim is reported to have committed a crime and/ or is on trial for it.
- 20** Articles which are predominantly about refugees or immigration.
- 21** Articles where the main focus is Salman Rushdie or the Satanic Verses.
- 22** Articles about ethnic minorities (issues) of which Muslims are included, e.g. Multiculturalism.
- 23** Articles which involve peaceful protests, anything described as violent or a riot should be coded under 38.
- 24** Articles which concern Muslims in conflict with other Muslims including clashes between moderates and extremists.
- 25** Articles about Prince Charles in any connection with Muslims.
- 26** Historical/ factual articles on Islam. Articles about the Koran.
- 27** 'Soft' news stories which record amusing incidences concerning Muslims and their culture e.g. 'Holy Tomatoes'.
- 28** Articles that focus on personal relationships likely to be between a Muslim and non-Muslim who then converts, in this case conversion is the subtopic.
- 29** Articles that deal with Muslims involved in business ventures.
- 30.** A news story where a Muslim has been involved and is identified as such but in which their 'being a Muslim' is a subsidiary factor to the central interest of the story e.g. a car crash.
- 31** Stories about media coverage or programmes dealing with Islam.
- 32** Stories where the focus is the Muslim Parliament.
- 33** Stories about the number of Muslims in the UK.
- 34** News stories involving Muslim sports people (not reviews or features).
- 35** Where the main topic is the segregation of the Muslim community or the community is involved in activities to unite their community which is interpreted as an issue of segregation.
- 36** A general religious issue (not specific to Islam) as with religious education.
- 37** Stories involving the medical health of Muslims, health provision etc.

38 Articles which feature prominently or emphasise the cultural or legal differences of Muslims.

39 Articles where Muslim groups/ communities clash in some way with the authorities e.g. the police. (If this involves fundamentalist groups it should be coded as 01).

40 Articles which feature the nature of activities of a Muslim community, emphasising the 'community', not about any of the other topics featured here, e.g. the community centre, fund-raising activities.

41 Stories where the Muslim community interacts with the non-Muslim community, e.g. in working for a charity.

99 Any article about Muslims or Islam that does not fit into any of the above categories.

For Section 7: References.

Code as with topics (they are not though, the same numbers as their corresponding topics) or where a reference does not appear as a topic:

02 Where the Government or local government are involved in the article, e.g. education policy.

07 Articles which refer only to the Bradford riots.

14 Articles including Muslim hostility towards Jews.

17 Articles which involve the action of Islamic groups such as The Muslim Council of Britain (not fundamentalist groups).

19 Articles which feature Muslims from other countries or other countries in the action.

20 Articles which refer to abuse in Islam or are interpreted as such (could be based on Islamic law).

21 Articles which directly involve members of the Nation of Islam or the group is referred to.

22 Examples of fundamentalist politics or political activism which is interpreted as such.

23 Equal opportunities policies or examples of or calls for equality and/ or tolerance.

24 Where cultural differences are emphasised and may be causing a problem for Muslim integration (interpreted as).

27 Where Muslims are seen to be causing trouble to other minority groups (rather than religions).

30 Stories which refer to the relationship between East and West or Islam and Christianity in some way.

Appendix C:

Glossary of terms used in discourse analysis:¹

Detraction: where a disjuncture occurs between the headline and report (van Dijk, 1991).

Global coherence: relations between facts (between articles) (van Dijk, 1988b: 61-65).

Local coherence: relationships between facts (in sentences) (van Dijk, 1988b: 61).

Macrosemantics: global (overall) meanings (van Dijk, 1988b: 26).

Macrostructure: the hierarchical organisation of the text (van Dijk, 1988b: 32).

Metonymia: a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated (see van Dijk, 1991: 222).

Modality: 'comment' or 'attitude' ascribable to the source of a text, for example; giving permission or expressing desirability (Fowler, 1991: 85).

Nominalisations: sentences without full clauses with active verbs, often used to conceal responsible agency (van Dijk, 1991: 63).

Participants: the entities involved in the process (Trew, 1979: 123).

Process: term used by Halliday as 'covering all phenomena to which a specification of time attaches whether events, relations or states' (Trew, 1979: 123).

Propositions: single sentence clauses (van Dijk, 1988b: 31).

Register (linguistic): 'a set of meanings that is appropriate to a particular function of language, together with the words or structures which express these meanings' (Halliday, quoted in Fowler, 1991: 37).

Schemata/ superstructure: overall organisational patterns (van Dijk, 1988b: 26).

Semantics: meanings of words, sentences and discourse (van Dijk, 1988b: 25).

Speech acts: social acts by the use of words, e.g. promise, accuse, congratulate (van Dijk, 1988b:26).

Trans-coding: the counter strategy of taking an existing (negative) meaning and re-appropriating it with a new (positive) meaning (Hall, 1997b: 270).

Transactive clause: a process with 2 participants, one the active clause, one acted upon (Trew 1979: 124).

¹ Most of these linguistic tools are described in any of the books utilised here, however, I have provided a reference for easy referral.

Appendix D:
Questionnaire.*

University of Leicester

Centre for Mass Communication Research

Background Information.

Please complete the following questions:

First name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: M F

Subjects
studying: _____

What is your first language? _____

What language do you speak at home? _____

Do you know any other languages? _____

Where did your family originally migrate from and when? _____

Were you born in the UK, if not where were you born? If yes, what generation are you?

Religious Affiliation

What is your religion? _____

Do you practice your religion on a regular basis? _____

How important is your religion in your personal life? Give examples:

Media Usage

Do you read a newspaper regularly? How often? _____

Which one and why do you choose this one? _____

Do you live with your parents or other relative/ guardian? _____

If so, do they read a newspaper, which one? _____

Do you read this paper? _____

What do you think of it? _____

Are you interested in the news? _____

What is your main source of news? _____

Do you have access to any minority papers? If so, where, what are they and do you read them?

***Note:** this was distributed to all participants so as not to make assumptions about the ethnic origins of white participants.

Appendix E:

Individual Written Response.

Exercise One.

Opinions of events.

1) Firstly read the newspaper article quickly in the manner that you would when reading a newspaper, i.e. scan etc. What is your initial impression of what the article is about? What are your initial responses to it?

2) Read the article more carefully.

Does this add to your ideas of what it is about?

Give your reaction to the events represented.

(For example: how does it make you feel and why? Do you dislike or disagree with it in any way or like and agree with it? Are there any parts in particular you disagree/ agree with ? Is there anything you disbelieve? Or do you feel indifferent to the subject?

Do you think it is an accurate representation of events? If not, how would you change it?)

You can mark the text. Mark any words or passages that you feel have particular importance.

Appendix F: **Topic Guides.**

Topic Guide*. Muslims: Blasphemy. (Mail article).

Understanding of Media texts: representation of Muslims.

Introduction: All say name and paper they read, where they live and with whom.

Initial responses:

Understanding of what article is about. Recognition of story.

Manner of reading.

Initial responses: re:event:

Opinion on whether laws should be changed, why? Do we live in a multicultural society?

What do they know about the law in this country?

Do they think all religions should have equal status in the law? Repeal laws or extend?

Freedom of speech? Censorship Vs Protection of religion?

Religious discrimination-is it necessary to have laws on this? eg. discrimination at work.

Would laws work? Islamophobia-does it exist?

Attitude to Rushdie affair. Have they heard of it? Satanic Verses? What is it about? Who was to blame?

Discussion of event. Particular aspects of article disagree/agree with, like/dislike, find offensive? Coverage of Rushdie Affair, biased? In what way?

Do you agree with this representation of events? Fair/accurate representation of events?

Similar related coverage/stories seen, current state of events.

Attitude to Muslims:

What does this article mean to you?

Do you think this is an accurate representation of the issues and you?

How would you represent it, what's missing?

Do you see this kind of coverage having any impact on your lives?

If disagreement occurs. Encourage people to think about why- identify experiences that have affected their opinions.

How do you think non-Muslims feel about you? Do they think the media has an impact? Do you think people recognise the differences between Muslims living in this country and abroad?

Include here reference to questions in questionnaire on own religion and what it means to them. Attitudes to secularism and other religious groups.

Do they discuss these types of issues, at home or elsewhere? Alternative sources of information?

Media Representation.

Which paper is it from?

Stereotypes. Bias.

Coverage of religious groups in general.

Suggestions for better practice in the media.

What is your message to media producers?

Refer back to questions in questionnaire on media usage. Alternative media?

*Used only as a prompt for me on issues to be covered.

Topic Guide. Non-Muslims: Muslim schools. (*Guardian* article)

Understanding of Media texts: representation of Muslims.

Introduction: All say name and paper they read, interest in the news.

Initial responses:

Understanding of what article is about. Recognition of story.

Initial responses: re:event. Funding of Muslim schools.

Discussion of event. Do you think the Government was right to fund Muslim schools?

Why/not? Why do Muslims want their own schools?

Equality or withdraw funding from religious schools? Do we live in a multicultural society?

Recognition? Is religion a private matter?

Why may some people disagree with funding? Segregation or Integration? Standards?

Particular aspects of article disagree/agree with, like/dislike

Do you agree with this representation of events?

Fair/accurate representation of events? Positive or negative article?

Similar related coverage seen

Attitude to Muslims:

What do you understand/ is your impression of/ about the people represented from this article?

Would you agree with this in general? What is your perception of Muslims?

Why do you think this?

Knowledge of Muslims. Friends, people who live near them, colleagues? Who are they?

Primary source of information about Muslims.

Is there a difference between Muslims who live in Britain and abroad?

Discussed this before? in what context?

If disagreement occurs. Encourage people to think about why- identify experiences that have affected their opinions

Media Representation.

Stereotypes. Bias. Do you recognise the paper? How may this affect coverage?

Coverage of religious groups in general.

Suggestions for better practice in the media.

What is your message to media producers?

End: Summarise outcomes. Do you think we've missed anything in our discussion?

Immediately following session: summarise key points/themes arising. Check tape recorder.

Appendix G: Materials used in Focus Groups.



Figure 1: *The Mail*: 11/8/97, p.17.



Figure 2: *The Mail*: 30/7/97, p.13.



Figure 3: *The Guardian*: 10/1/98, p.7.
Section 1 by John Carvel, Section 2 by Vivek Chaudhary,
Education Correspondents.
Photo: Garry Weaser/ *The Guardian* ©.



Figure 4: *The Times*: 24/11/97, p.12.

Thank you to *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* for allowing the inclusion of this material in this thesis.

Appendix H:

Frequencies of all Topics and References in total.

TOPIC	Frequency AS TOPIC	Frequency SUBTOPIC	Frequency REF1	Frequency REF2	TOTAL	PER-CENTAGE
Belief	33	49	<u>58</u>	49	189	22.5%
Education	<u>128</u>	26	12	18	184	21.9%
Islamic Fundamen- talism	<u>57</u>	39	36	30	162	19.3%
World Affairs	-	-	<u>101</u>	55	156	18.6%
Relations to Christianity	28	<u>50</u>	41	18	137	16.3%
Adjustment to culture	9	28	45	<u>52</u>	134	16%
Racism	21	<u>41</u>	40	31	133	15.8%
Muslim community	8	6	<u>52</u>	50	116	13.8%
Relationships	<u>60</u>	30	13	8	111	13.2%
Relations to other religions	16	<u>30</u>	29	29	104	12.4%
Gender	17	<u>33</u>	27	20	97	11.5%
Government	-	-	45	<u>49</u>	94	11.2%
Criminal Activity	43	<u>50</u>	-	-	93	11.1%
Rushdie	21	21	<u>22</u>	17	81	9.6%
Politics	<u>54</u>	13	5	8	80	9.5%
Conversion	16	21	20	<u>22</u>	79	9.4%
Freedom of speech	<u>28</u>	24	10	9	71	8.4%
Immigration	<u>25</u>	17	8	17	67	8%
Media	<u>41</u>	26	-	-	67	8%
Religion	8	<u>57</u>	-	-	65	7.7%
Cultural Atrocities	-	-	32	30	62	7.4%
Prince Charles	<u>41</u>	2	5	4	52	6.2%
Anti-racism	10	8	15	<u>18</u>	51	6%
Unrest	<u>15</u>	13	11	10	49	5.8%
Offence caused to religious groups	-	-	<u>25</u>	23	48	5.7%
Business	<u>13</u>	12	12	8	45	5.3%
Islamophobia	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	9	9	40	4.7%
Ethnic minorities	9	<u>12</u>	8	9	38	4.5%
Health	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	-	-	34	4%
Segregation	-	<u>28</u>	-	-	28	3.3%
East/West relations	-	-	<u>16</u>	12	28	3.3%

Muslim Parliament	7	3	<u>14</u>	3	27	3.2%
Cultural/legal differences	4	<u>23</u>	-	-	27	3.2%
Mosques	9	<u>10</u>	4	3	26	3.1%
Anti-Jewish sentiments	-	-	16	10	26	3.1%
Sport	<u>19</u>	6	-	-	25	2.9%
Peaceful protest	<u>13</u>	10	-	-	23	2.7%
Facts about Islam	10	<u>13</u>	-	-	23	2.7%
Food	<u>12</u>	9	2	-	23	2.7%
Islamic committees	-	-	10	<u>13</u>	23	2.7%
Nation of Islam	-	-	<u>18</u>	5	23	2.7%
Relations with host community	8	<u>13</u>	-	-	21	2.5%
Rise of Islam	-	2	<u>9</u>	5	16	1.9%
Mocking stories	4	<u>12</u>	-	-	16	1.9%
Deprivation	-	-	<u>10</u>	6	16	1.9%
Anti-Western	-	<u>6</u>	4	5	15	1.7%
Conflict between Muslims	2	<u>10</u>	-	-	12	1.4%
Crisis of Faith	1	<u>6</u>	-	-	7	0.8%
Bradford riots	-	-	<u>4</u>	3	7	0.8%
'Normal' news stories	-	4	-	-	4	0.4%
Population	-	1	1	1	3	0.3%

Appendix I:

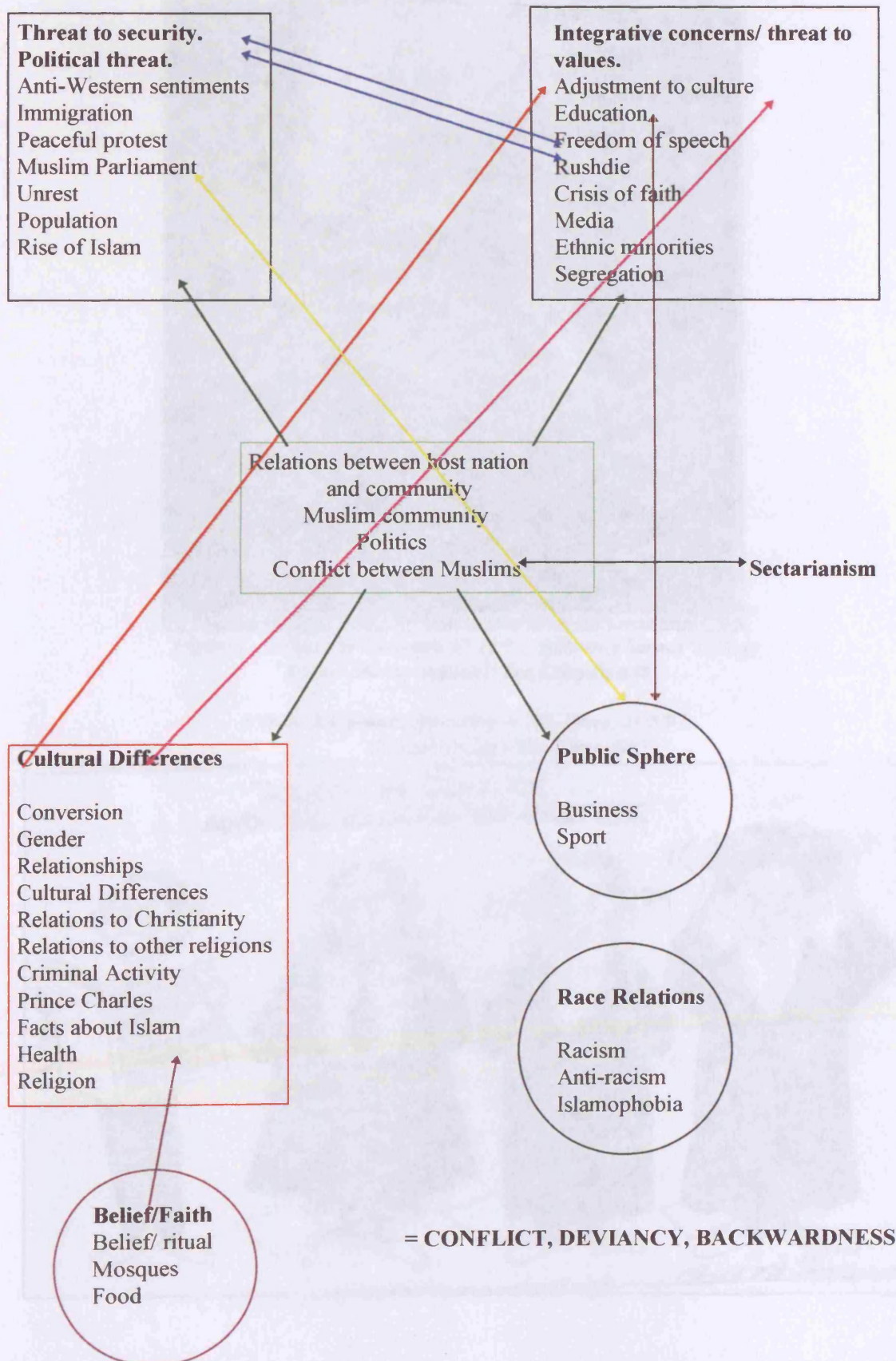
Representations of Islam yearly and by paper.

Topic	1994		1995		1996		Total occurrence
	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	
<u>Fundamentalism*</u>	11	17	1	12	9	7	<u>57</u>
Adjustment to culture	1	1	2	4	1	0	9
Belief	6	7	4	6	6	4	33
Conversion	1	1	5	6	1	2	16
<u>Education</u>	22	35	6	20	23	22	<u>128</u>
Mosques	0	2	0	1	3	3	9
Food	0	3	3	3	1	2	12
Gender	0	4	1	9	1	2	17
Freedom of speech	4	2	6	5	6	5	28
Islamophobia	0	3	0	3	0	5	10
Crisis of faith	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Racism	0	6	1	8	1	5	21
Anti-racism	1	0	0	4	0	5	10
<u>Politics</u>	3	5	8	14	13	11	<u>54</u>
Relations to Christianity	2	3	8	4	5	6	28
Relations to other religions	2	5	2	5	0	2	16
<u>Criminal Activity</u>	5	5	3	8	7	15	<u>43</u>
Immigration	0	2	8	3	6	6	25
Rushdie	2	5	7	5	1	1	21
Ethnic minorities	0	2	0	3	1	3	9
Peaceful Protest	2	0	2	3	3	3	13
Conflict between Muslims	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Prince Charles	5	9	2	1	19	5	43
Facts about Islam	0	1	2	5	0	2	10
Ridicule	0	2	0	0	2	0	4
<u>Relationships</u>	4	3	12	13	15	13	<u>60</u>
Business	1	1	0	4	6	1	13
Media	3	8	4	17	2	7	41
Muslim Parliament	0	0	0	1	2	4	7
Sport	1	6	2	5	3	2	19
Religion	1	0	2	0	2	3	8
Health	3	3	3	4	2	2	17

Cultural Differences	0	3	0	0	0	1	4
Unrest	0	2	4	6	0	3	15
Muslim community	0	4	0	3	0	1	8
Relations with host community	1	3	0	3	1	0	8
Other	6	4	1	2	5	1	19
Total	87	157	100	190	147	156	837

* Those underlined are the most dominant topics which have been analysed in detail in Ch.3.

Appendix J: Topical Clusters: Themes and meanings of British Islam.



*examined in Chapter 4.



Photo: Murdo Macleod **The Guardian** ©

© Peter Brookes/The Times 1997





Figure 3: Photo: Ian Stewart/ The Guardian ©.

Figure 3 shows Sarwar leaving court following charges, The Guardian, 18/12/97 and Figure 4 following Sarwar's acquittal, The Guardian 26/3/99.

The contrast in the tone of the two photographs represent Sarwar's freedom from political isolation.



Figure 4: Photo: Murdo Macleod/ The Guardian ©

Appendix L:

Tabulated Demographic Details (Audience)

Table 1: Gender of participants: Focus groups.

	Female	Male	Total	%
Muslim	6	6	12	24
Contact	8	13	21	43
Non Contact	13	3	16	33
Total	27	22	49	
%	55	45		

Table 2: Religious affiliation by origin.

	Indian	African	Philippine	Malawi	Mixed Race*	Punjabi	Total
Hindu	1				2		3
Catholic			1				1
Muslim	7	3		1	1		12
Sikh						2	2
Total	8	3	1	1	3	2	18

*African/Indian

Table 3: The importance of religion by religious groupings.

	Not Important	Sometimes important	Important	Very Important	Total	%
None	11				11	22
Christian	14	3		1	18	37
Sikh		1	1		2	4
Hindu	1	2			3	6
Muslim			5	7	12	24
Atheist	3				3	6
Total	29	6	6	8	49	
%	59	12	12	16		

Table 4: First language (reported) of ethnic group members.

	Gujerati	English	Punjabi	Katchi	Total
Hindu	3				3
Muslim	10 83%	1		1	12
Sikh			2		2
Total	13	1	2	1	17

Table 5: Interest in news.

	Interested		Sometimes		No Interest	
Muslim	7	58%	1	8%	2	16%
Contact	15	71%	2	9.5	3	14%
NonContact	9	56%	6	37.5	1	6%
Total	31	63	9	18	6	12

(Unreported cases= 2 Muslims, 1 contact.)

Table 6: Newspaper usage.

	Everyday	Regularly	Occasion	Rarely	Unreported
Muslim	4	4	0	2	2
Contact	7	5	4	4	1
NonContact	5	4	4	3	0
Total	16	13	8	9	3
%	32	26.5	16	18	6

Table 7: Main source of news.

	TV		Newspaper		Radio		Teletext		Personal Contacts		Satellite	
Muslim	7	58%	2	17%	1	8%						1
Contact	14	66%	6	28.5	1	5%	2	9.5	1			1
NonContact	15	94%	5	31%	3	19%						
Total	36	73%	13	26.5	5	10%	2	4%	1	2%	2	4%

(Note: some students chose more than one type of medium).

Table 8: Newspaper readership.

	Muslim	Contact	NonContact	Total	Read Parents Newspaper	
					No.	%
Local	5	6	8	19	14	74
Times	2	3		5	5	100
Guardian		6		6	4	67
Sun	2	3	5	10	5	50
Mirror	1	4	1	6	3	50
Express	1	1	2	4	2	50
Mail		1	3	4	3	75
Independent		1		1	1	100
Socialist Worker		2		2		
Church Times		1		1		
Muslim News	1			1		
Total	12	28	19	59	37	63%
More Than 1 Paper		11*	3*			28%

*The breakdown is included in the above.

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