Islamophobia in the UK: The role of British newspapers

in shaping attitudes towards Islam and Muslims

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how Islam and Muslims are portrayed in British mainstream newspapers, whether the image presented is distorted and misleading and what impact this has on public opinion. Events over the past two decades have led to the religion becoming hyper-visible. This increased interest and the recent Leveson Inquiry into press ethics makes the need for this research timely. Research was based on a review of relevant literature and an extensive study of articles from the tabloids and broadsheets. This involved articles prior to 9/11, in the wake of 9/11, in the wake of 7/7 and post 7/7.

The findings highlight that there is a disproportionate amount of coverage connected to Islam and Muslims. Evidence has been uncovered that suggests that some newspapers, especially the tabloids, have tended to present Muslims and Islam in a negative light, resorting to stereotypical images that present the religion as monolithic and barbaric. The religion and its followers are often presented through a series of 'snap-shots' that serve only to highlight differences and portray Islam as a threat. The analysis has also indicated that some newspapers have invented Muslim stories; a serious charge.

Whilst the research has demonstrated that there is no quick fix to these issues, steps need to be taken to ensure that reporting moves away from age old stereotypes. At the heart of this lies a solution based on better educating editors and journalists about the Islamic faith. The question about whether

there needs to be a new regulator that all newspapers ascribe to also needs to be addressed. At the very least the role of the Press Complaints Commission should be reviewed and it should be recommended that serving editors do not sit on its board, as this is a conflict of interest.

"Islamophobia seems to be the last respectable prejudice available in modern Britain."[1]

This was the claim made by Peter Oborne and James Jones, authors of *Muslims Under Siege*, which examined whether the London bombings on 7 July 2005 (7/7) and the fear of terrorism had helped fuel the rise in violence, intolerance and hatred against British Muslims. The attacks, which shocked the nation, had seen four British Islamist terrorists detonate bombs during morning rush hour. Three bombs were detonated on underground trains and the fourth on a bus. Fifty-six people were killed, including the bombers, and over seven hundred were injured[2,3,4,5]. Oborne and Jones' research indicated that certain quarters of the press regularly presented Islam and Muslims in a negative light. Over a decade earlier Akbar Ahmed had claimed that nothing in history had threatened Muslims like the media[6]. More recently in 2011, Baroness Warsi, the then co-chairman of the Conservative Party, echoed their sentiments claiming that the media gave only a superficial discussion of Islam and that prejudice against Muslims had "passed the dinner table test"[7].

They are not alone, numerous reports and academic studies have also suggested that the press has played a key role in shaping public opinion, a number of these will be discussed in Chapter 2. Public opinion surveys also indicate a link between what is presented in the media and how the public perceives Islam and Muslims. A 2002 YouGov Poll indicated that over 60% of people acquired what they knew about Islam from the media[8] and the 2011

ComRes survey suggested that British people were most likely to blame the media for Islamophobia[9]. The purpose of this dissertation will be to assess these claims.

The last twenty years has seen a growing number of studies and publications related to how newspapers report stories connected to Islam. The work of Edward Said, whose *Covering Islam*[10] has helped to inform many subsequent studies into the press' portrayal of Islam, Elizabeth Poole who has written extensively on the subject[11,12,13], John Richardson[14,15] and Elzain Elgamri[16] who have both examined how the broadsheets portray Islam and Muslims and Julian Petley and Robin Richardson's publication *"Pointing the Finger"*[17] will help to inform my examination. Their various studies, amongst others, have concluded that Muslims are often portrayed negatively. I will also draw on a number of influential reports that examine the role the media has played in shaping the public's views of Islam. This will include the 1997 Runnymede Trust's *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*[18] the findings of which laid the groundwork for subsequent studies. These will provide a wealth of information on the ways in which the press presents Islam and also offer suggestions for how reporting could be improved.

The past two decades have seen an increase in newspaper articles on Islam and Muslims. This growth has been prompted, in part, by national and international developments. It has been claimed that these developments have led to the word 'Islam' evoking a range of negative images, from terrorists to *mullah's* exhorting Muslims to shun the temptations of the

Western world[19]. Acts of terrorism such as 7/7 and 11 September 2001 (9/11)[20,21,22], which saw the terrorist group al-Qaeda[23,24] hijack four passenger airplanes and launch suicide attacks upon the United States, killing almost three thousand, have meant that Muslims have found themselves in the media spotlight in a way that they have never previously experienced[25]. This increased attention provides academics with an opportunity to examine how the discourses of social theory play out in the press. It also provides an opportunity to discover and evaluate how press outlets perform their role as information providers during times of crisis and unrest.

Words are powerful and therefore how they are used matters greatly. Printed media continues to play an important role in shaping opinions as well as helping to set agendas regarding how important certain topics are[26]. Mistakes can mislead public opinion and journalists bear a great responsibility in ensuring that religions and communities are depicted fairly and accurately. Newspapers have to simplify an event whilst not trivialising it. This dissertation will explore how the press has presented major news stories over the past twenty years. Does the press report stories connected to Islam and Muslims accurately or is the image presented distorted and misleading? What challenges do journalists face when reporting about the religion and its followers? What factors are involved in influencing the patterns, trends and attitudes adopted in the press? How far can it be said that the press is helping to fuel Islamophobia? These are important questions as Islamophobia prevents Muslims from taking full part in society. The 2011 census demonstrated that there are 2.7 million Muslims living in England and

Wales[27], making Islam the second largest religion. The United Kingdom has one of the most diverse Muslim communities in Europe[28] and if community cohesion is really to work then it is essential that people understand one another. It is only through such an understanding that minority groups can participate fully in society.

To answer these questions I will be exploring a number of newspaper articles to identify common themes. This will enable an examination of the ways in which Islam and Muslims are being presented. The methods that will be employed during my research and the rationale behind such methods will be discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will examine reporting prior to 2002, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 and post 7/7. My examination will contain a critical evaluation of a range of stories from both the tabloids and the broadsheets so to ascertain whether certain types of newspapers have common themes. I will evaluate how the press reported events during this period and analyse how these events could have helped to shape both the British press' view and the public's view.

Despite the increased interest in this area there is still scope for further study, especially in light of the recent Leveson Inquiry[29] into the ethics of the press. Few previous studies have undertaken an examination of tabloids and broadsheets over an extended period of time. Such a study will provide a much clearer idea of common themes and will also enable any changes in style and format of press reporting to be identified. Furthermore, it will allow for a discussion as to whether the press has taken on board any of the

suggestions that have been outlined in previous reports before pinpointing future courses of action. The conclusions and recommendations from my findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

2.1) Introduction

The last twenty years has seen an increased interest in how Islam and Muslims are represented in the media. This Literature Review will focus on three elements that will inform my own analysis.

Firstly, in order to examine whether there is evidence of Islamophobia in newspaper articles it is important to briefly examine the meaning of the term. Some of the most important works that have sought to define Islamophobia will be discussed. Secondly, reports and publications that have examined the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media will be reviewed. This will provide a wealth of information that will be invaluable for my own analysis and conclusions, as it will help identify any patterns or themes in newspaper stories. It will also provide examples of articles that can be analysed further. Finally, examining previous studies will help provide an understanding of the pressures journalists face and the sources of guidance and information that are available regarding codes of conduct and how to report issues connected to race and religion. Furthermore it will enable recommendations for the future to be identified.

2.2) Islamophobia – Its meaning and origins

It is claimed that Islamophobia has become a "much used but little understood term"[30]. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Islamophobia as "a hatred or fear of Islam or Muslims"[31]. However; the coinage and origins of the term are disagreed upon[32]. Cesari[33] argues that it first appeared in a 1922 essay by Orientalist Etienne Dinet[34]. Conversely, Fourest and Venner claim that the term was first used during the Iranian Revolution by the *Mullahs* to describe women who refused to wear the hijab[35]. Others disagree with the term's usage. Werbner[36], Modood[37], Vertovec[38], Halliday[39] and Richardson[40], have all questioned its validity, highlighting how it can be used imprecisely.

According to Allen it is widely believed that Islamophobia, in the context that we know today, has its origins in Britain[41]. However, it was not until the 1990s that we see the establishment of Islamophobia as a phenomenon and concept. This was due to the publication by the Runnymede Trust of its 1997 report *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*. It offered a firm definition of the term, giving it political and public recognition. It defined Islamophobia as being:

"unfounded hostility towards Islam. Unfair discrimination against Muslims individually or as part of a group".[42]

It argued that throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was a culture of mistrust and contempt for Islam and claimed that the media was using Muslim

stereotypes that were harmful[43]. The aim of the report was to provide a way of distinguishing between legitimate criticism and unfounded hostility. In order to effectively analyse the role that newspapers have had in shaping British attitudes towards Islam and Muslims, one has to be able to make this distinction. Understanding what is meant by 'unfounded' is crucial, but it can be a difficult task to distinguish between 'founded' and 'unfounded' criticism. The written word can be open to a variety of interpretations and can be read in a way the author did not intend. However, this does not mean that people should shy away from the task. Halliday argues that, despite the challenges, it is important that people make the effort to do so[44].

It is here where Allen adds an important element to the construction of the term. Allen sees Islamophobia as being an ideology similar to racism[45]. For Allen it is connected to how Islam and Muslims are thought about, spoken about, written about and referred to[46]. In this sense Islamophobia relates to the negative ways in which Muslims have been viewed by sections of society.

In order to make the distinction clearer the Runnymede report discussed the importance of 'open views' as opposed to 'closed views'. Open views contain elements of legitimate criticism but will appreciate and respect Islam. Such views demonstrate the diversity of Islam and highlight shared values. Closed views are those that contain a phobic dread of Islam[47]. Such views often feed off each other and see Islam as monolithic and static. Islam is perceived as the 'other', having little in common with the Western world. These views create an image of Islam as 'inferior', 'primitive', 'barbaric' and 'oppressive'.

This can lead to Muslims being discriminated against and where hostility towards the faith and its followers is accepted. The notion of 'closed views' will play an important part in my analysis.

2.3) The relationship between Islam and the West

For many, Islamophobia in the press is a re-emergence of historical anti-Muslim discourse that stretches back centuries[48,49]. A report published by Runnymede in 2004 stated that hostility towards Muslims had been a feature of European societies since the eighth century[50]. Whitworth shares this view, arguing that stereotypical constructs about Islam are nothing new and are part of the historically conflictual relationship between West and East[51]. Akel also traces the conflict back to when Islam spread outside Saudi Arabia and the Church became involved in a fierce "war of words"[52] to ensure that Islam did not gain sympathisers. Pratt believes that it was no surprise that the two religions clashed when theologically they were similar[53]. These similarities served not only to put the two religions in mutual competition but also on what Esposito describes as a "collision course"[54] that has lasted for centuries.

Some academics have argued that the colonial period gave rise to a reuse of such negative images so to legitimise the subjection of the Muslim world by a few European countries[55,56]. In this struggle for domination a picture was created of Islam as a demonic and blasphemous religion. Muslims were

portrayed as irrational, fanatic and despotic so to justify the colonial cause[57,58].

The question about whether Islamophobia has existed since the beginning of Muslim – Christian interaction is not for the confines of this dissertation. The Runnymede report warned that a degree of caution is needed when analysing historical events as human interpretation can be biased. People often make selective use of the past in order to understand the present[59]. In the search for understanding, events are constantly being redefined and reinvented by both Muslims and non-Muslims. However, Kincheloe and Steinberg argue that we do "need to clean up the historical distortions"[60], events of the past impact on the present. For this reason it is not entirely possible to separate the story told within the press from historical depictions of Islam[61]. Even if Islamophobia is a modern concept history provides a frame of reference for our understanding. This will be a useful tool in my analysis.

2.4) Islamophobia and the press

Whilst scholars debate the term, it is, as Richardson states, "here to stay"[62]. For the authors of the original Runnymede report Islamophobia represented a dangerous feature of society, which needed to be addressed[63].

According to research by Lambert and Githens-Mazer the rise in anti- Muslim hate crimes demonstrates that Muslims are facing increased intimidation and

violence[64]. 9/11 and 7/7 and the fear of terrorism have led to what has been argued to be an "exponential increase in Islamophobic rhetoric and agendas"[65]. Oborne and Jones, also argue that increasingly Muslims are facing physical attacks that are a result of, at least in part, "the media's assault on Britain's Muslims"[66].

Analysis of police crime data demonstrates that it is difficult to gauge the true scale of anti-Muslim hate crimes, let alone demonstrate a concrete link between these crimes and newspaper reporting. This is something that Lambert and Githens-Mazer acknowledged[67]. In many cases crimes will go unreported because of a fear of retaliation or alienation. Police procedures for reporting such crimes are also inadequate. The Metropolitan Police publishes figures for anti-Muslim hate crime under the heading of "Islamophobia" and these figures are useful as they demonstrate that in the last two years there has been a 92% rise in Islamophobic crimes, despite incidents of other racist and religious crimes falling by 2.2%[68], (see Appendix 1). However, current reporting practices nationally do not provide the same level of information (see Appendix 2). Therefore it is impossible to accurately measure how many anti-Muslim hate crimes are taking place in Britain. Crimes against Muslims related to their religious affiliation appear in Home Office figures under the heading of 'Religious hate crime'. It is therefore only possible to measure the total number of race and religious hate crimes. As Engage's Anti-Muslim hate crime report of 2012 asserts[69], it is crucial that specific types of crimes are identified. Whilst overall figures published by the Home Office might show a

decrease in hate crime (see Appendix 2.2) it cannot be assumed that this entails that anti-Muslim crime is also decreasing.

The media is not monolithic and in any analysis of newspapers portrayal of Muslims and Islam it would be wrong to treat the media as one homogenous group. The media has the "quirks, divisions and points of departure that one would expect from any diverse community"[70]. It is a highly complex entity and journalists do not operate in a political or cultural vacuum. Journalists function within frameworks and use those frameworks to understand the world that they report on[71]. The OSCE report suggested that journalists are susceptible to subjectivity and that their reports are influenced by their own personal and cultural view of the world[72].

It should also be recognised that British newspapers vary in style and format. Tabloids, as Baker *et al* point out, contain short articles with a focus on entertainment [73]. Their writing style is more informal than that of the broadsheets. Tabloid headlines often include puns; broadsheets contain more text, international news and political analysis. The social class of the reader is also likely to impact on how stories are selected and written. Tabloids may see their readers as being less financially stable and therefore more concerned by stories connected to such topics as immigration and perceived 'threats'[74]. Baker *et al* also suggest that one should consider whether the newspaper in question is left-leaning and therefore more likely to be concerned with social equality or right-leaning which tends to describe an outlook that supports social hierarchies [75] (see Appendix 3). This is an

important consideration as such political allegiances may well impact on how a specific story is presented.

Akhtar argues that many people gain their knowledge of Islam and Muslims not from first hand experience or academic study but from the "omnipotent media"[76]. Many others such as Ahmed[77], van Dijk[78], Elgamri[79] and Zebiri[80] also contend that the press has a significant reach. The power of the press was also demonstrated in research carried out in 2002 by a YouGov poll[81]. From this it is evident that the media plays a significant role in helping to shape public opinion, although it cannot be concluded that the media is directly responsible for any attacks on Muslims.

2.5) The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the press

Previous studies into the power of the press have demonstrated its ability to shape public opinion[82,83].

Said produced what many regard as a landmark work within this field, which has helped to inform subsequent studies. In *Covering Islam*[84], Said examined the origins and repercussions of the media's monolithic images of Islam. He argued that the media controls and filters information selectively so to determine what the public learns about Islam. His political analysis of media coverage is highly valuable as it covers an area that was often unexplored in many mass media studies. Although he does not go into detail about the

processes that are involved in deciding what particular images are presented, he does provide a wealth of evidence to suggest the media presents a negative view of Islam. Said claimed that the dominant media image was of an Islam that was 'oppressive', 'backward' and 'dangerous', images that he argued were centuries old and were just repeated by the media. Despite changes within the political landscape since the publication of his work it nevertheless remains valuable and provides a useful examination of the media's portrayal of Islam prior to events such as 9/11.

Poole has written a number of important books within this field. Reporting Islam[85] is particularly useful as it analysed all articles on British Muslims in *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Times* from 1993-1997. This provides an in depth study undertaken over an extended period of time. Many other studies do not offer such an extensive and systematic analysis. Her findings indicated that Muslims are often stereotyped as 'irrational', 'threatening' and 'extremist'[86]. Poole also provides an analysis of articles from *The Guardian* and *The Times*, including their Internet sites during September - October 2001. This analysis demonstrates how the image in the press had changed little. For Poole, the dominant themes that came out of reports in the aftermath of 9/11 were connected to terrorism and the notion of the 'threat within'[87].

John Richardson's, *(Mis)Representing Islam*[88], also provides a valuable insight into the representation of Islam and Muslims by elite broadsheets and examines how they are implicated in the production and reproduction of anti-

Muslim racism. His study entailed an analysis of articles from October 1997 - January 1998. Richardson's work provides an excellent model for Critical Discourse Analysis. His use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis helps to demonstrate the biases that run throughout the broadsheets. It builds on the notion of 'closed views' demonstrated in the Runnymede report and demonstrates that Muslims are often viewed negatively as the 'other' and too often connected with 'terrorism' and 'extremism'.

In the wake of 9/11 the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) implemented a reporting system on potential anti-Islamic reactions in its European Union member states[89]. The report, indicated that the UK media had given a disproportionate amount of coverage to extremist groups. It argued that increased coverage of the more extreme figures within Islam was adding to hostility and fear[90]. The report suggested that the UK media depended on historical archetypes and contemporary stereotypes and that such dependence had had a negative impact on how Muslims are portrayed[91]. Although it stated that the role and impact of the media was both contentious and debateable[92] and that it could not find evidence that media reports had directly caused acts of violence[93] it concluded that the impact of the media should not be dismissed[94]. The report issued a series of recommendations for the future, including ensuring journalists are better informed about Islam, that mainstream Muslim voices are given an equal platform and that Muslim groups and the media needed to work together more closely[95].

Whilst this report provides examples of how British newspapers have presented Islam and Muslims pre and post 9/11, its focus was tabloid newspapers. Although tabloid sales make up a significant percentage of newspaper sales (see Appendix 4) they only represent one type of newspaper. The report fails to give an insight into how the broadsheets have presented Islam and Muslims. A comparison would have been useful, as it would have provided a fuller picture.

It is here where the work of Elgamri[96] proves valuable. Elgamri's analysis of *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* from 12 September - 24 October 2001 found that there were a total of 1,164 stories connected to Islam and Muslims. This is perhaps not surprising given the increased public interest in the religion. However, what is more telling are the findings in connection with the key themes. These included connecting Islam with violence, its hatred of the West and the tendency to see Islam as monolithic. The results of the analysis demonstrate that 'closed views' were evident in stories connected to 9/11. The repeated representation of Islam with militancy, extremism and terrorism was, for Elgamri, one of the most striking features of how the press chose to represent Islam post 9/11[97].

The Minority Rights Group International (MRG)[98] raised similar concerns. Their report highlighted articles it felt portrayed Muslims negatively. Although these articles were not discussed in great detail their inclusion provides anyone researching the topic with some initial articles that can be analysed further. It reinforced previous claims that the media had given prominence to

extremist Muslims and raised the concern that the public could assume that such people represented the religion as a whole[99]. A concern that is echoed in many later reports, including the 2007 report by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)[100] and a report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)[101]. During the MRG's examination a number of journalists were interviewed and one former tabloid journalist admitted that he would contact Muslims such as Omar Bakri Muhammad specifically because he knew he would provide "something outrageous"[102]. Syrian born Bakri Muhammad, had been instrumental in developing the political organisation Hizb ut-Tahir[103] in the UK; their goal was to create a single Islamic State. He left the group to set up al-Muhajiroun[104,105], the Islamist group that became notorious for praising the 9/11 attacks[106]. The report also argued that newspapers regularly prefaced 'Muslim' with words such as 'extremist', 'terrorist' and 'fundamentalist'[107]. This was echoed by both the *ENAR Shadow Report on Islamophobia in Europe*[108] and the OSCE-ODIHR Report[109]. Perhaps most importantly, it also raised questions about the role of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the voluntary regulatory body for British printed newspapers and magazines. This was something that the 1997 Runnymede report raised as an area that needed to be addressed[110]. It drew attention to the fact that under Article 13 the PCC can only look into complaints when they relate to an individual who then complains. This means that reports that could be seen to be prejudiced or inaccurate towards a third party or group cannot be objected to, as they are not directed to a particular person. It also reinforced the need for journalists to receive more training to help them better understand Islam[111].

The above-mentioned reports made many recommendations that Runnymede had made five years earlier. This suggests that both the Government and the media had largely ignored the recommendations of the Runnymede report. However, they were only recommendations, nothing compelled either body to act on them.

In light of this Runnymede published a further report in 2004[112]. This report provided a very detailed analysis of how much action had been taken to combat Islamophobia. Whilst it reinforced much of what had been said previously it made a significant contribution to research within this field. It provides further detailed examples of the press' use of 'closed views' in a variety of articles from both the tabloids and the broadsheets. These examples have helped to inform other reports and research in this field and will also play a crucial role in my own analysis. The report also drew attention to articles that were recognised as examples of good practice. This is highly valuable; any fair analysis of newspapers reporting of Islam and Muslims should contain a balanced examination of the variety of ways in which both the religion and its followers have been represented. The need to recognise the diversity in coverage to allow for fairer analysis was also highlighted by the IHRC's report into the British media's representation of Muslims[113]. Although the report again raised the issue of the role of the PCC, it provided a useful press code from America[114] that the report's authors believed gave much clearer guidance for journalists reporting about Islam and Muslims. This exemplar code is valuable as it offers guidance on what journalists should and

should not do when writing articles on Islam and Muslims. It stresses the need to avoid treating Islam as monolithic, avoid prefacing Muslim with words such as 'terrorist' or 'extremist' and also that journalists should not use words such as *jihad* or quotes unless they are certain of their meaning and provide historical or political context[115].

After 7/7 reports continued to raise questions about newspaper portrayals of Islam and Muslims.

The EUMC was one of the first to publish a report into the impact that the attacks had on Muslim communities in the European Union[116]. It provides an examination into the initial response of the media and suggests that in the immediate aftermath the media did show a degree of responsibility, stressing that the actions of a few did not relate to the whole Muslim community[117]. The report also demonstrates how some quarters of the press changed once the bombers were identified as British. This provides an interesting insight into how the focus and style of reporting can change as events unfold. However, the report was published too early to provide a real insight into the long-term impact of 7/7 on newspaper reports. In order to gain an insight into how the media reports stories connected to Islam and Muslims post 7/7 it is necessary to examine articles that are produced in the following months and even years.

It is here where the Greater London Authority's (GLA) report, *The search for common ground*[118] proves valuable. It also raised the question of the role of the PCC, especially in relation to its failure to consider complaints about how

groups or communities are covered, and recommended that it should consider complaints made by third parties[119]. More importantly the study encompassed a year's worth of articles, from May 2006 - April 2007. The results demonstrated that there were examples of good practice, including the fact that every British newspaper had refrained from publishing the Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad[120]. However, it found that the overall image of Islam and Muslims was negative. It uncovered examples of reports that were either distorted or exaggerated, reports that used emotive, alarmist and even abusive language and reports that suggested there was no common ground between Islam and the West[121]. During Muir and Smith's research they interviewed six Muslim journalists. Although all reporters were cautious of using the term Islamophobia, they felt that there was a tendency by newspapers to portray Muslims as a danger or problem[122].

The report is also useful in demonstrating the differences between portrayals in the tabloids as opposed to the broadsheets. During a focus week beginning on 8 May 2006 nineteen newspapers were analysed for stories connected to Islam and Muslims. 352 reports were identified and of these 91% were deemed to be negative[123]. Twelve of the papers analysed had no positive stories[124] and almost half of the stories represented Islam as a threat[125]. There was also evidence of the 'stock stories' that had been identified in the original Runnymede report, especially in relation to stories connected to human rights, immigration and women[126]. This was further evidenced in a report compiled by Ipsos Reid Public Affairs in 2008[127]. Of those newspapers analysed during the focus week 96% of tabloid articles

were judged to be negative compared to 89% of broadsheet articles[128]. This provides an interesting comparison between the two types of newspapers. Despite the fact that the combined circulation of the tabloids is much greater than the broadsheets (see Appendix 4), the results of the investigations on behalf of the GLA indicate that the issue of how the press represents Islam and Muslims is not an issue that relates purely to the tabloids. The findings of this report will also play a pivotal role in my own analysis. Many of these findings were to inform Petley and Richardson's, *Pointing the Finger*[129]. This is an important book that brings together the works of respected academics and journalists. It contains detailed case studies that I will be drawing on.

Despite the value of the GLA study it still only offers a very limited analysis of newspapers. For a true analysis a more extensive study is needed.

Moore *et al* [130] provide one of the most comprehensive studies of the representation of British Muslims in the press. Their research examined 974 articles connected to British Muslims between 2000 - 2008. Although the study only focused on stories connected to British Muslims it presents an invaluable collection of articles and findings. To narrow down results the study focused on five alternate years. Although this meant they avoided 2001 and 2005, the years when perhaps the most material connected to Islam and Muslims would be found, their research was able to capture the long-term aftermath, something that had been lacking in many previous studies. Their findings will play an important part in my own analysis.

The study reaffirmed previous findings. Firstly, it highlighted the preference of newspapers to focus on the more extreme voices, such as Bakri Muhammad and Abu Hamza[131]. Egyptian born radical Muslim cleric Abu Hamza[132] led the "Supporters of Shari'ah" an extremist group that believed in a strict interpretation of Islamic law. After being banned from preaching at Finsbury Park Mosque he openly preached in the streets and expressed support for al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden (1957-2011)[133,134,135,136]. Secondly, the report noted that the most negative portrayals were in the tabloids[137]. What is especially useful is the analysis that the study provides on the most common nouns and adjectives used in connection to British Muslims. The most common nouns were identified as 'terrorist', which appeared in 22% of articles, and 'extremist' which appeared in 18% of articles. The most common adjectives were 'radical' which appeared in 10% of the articles, and 'fanatical', which appeared in 7% of the articles[138]. There were few examples of positive nouns and adjectives. Although it is not possible to decipher in what context the terms appeared or whether they were used incorrectly it does demonstrate the overall focus of the stories and this is useful when analysing common media constructs.

The most recent analysis of the press' portrayal of Islam and Muslims has come from two different quarters.

Firstly, Baker *et al[139]* have provided a new insight into how linguistics can contribute to wider social debates. Their study used a detailed analysis of one hundred and forty million words from articles on Islam and Muslims,

combining corpus linguistics and discourse analysis methods to produce an objective picture of media attitudes. This is immensely valuable as it incorporates research on journalistic practices, readership patterns and surveys. It combines both an analysis of tabloids and broadsheets to provide a much fuller picture of the variety of ways that Muslims have been perceived and conceived by the press. The key findings of their work included not only issues connected to the image of Islam as monolithic and the need to review the PCC, but the fact that right-leaning tabloids produced some of the most Islamophobic representations, that columnists were more prone to producing negative or offensive articles and that during 1998-2009 when 'New' Labour was in power Muslims were often used as scapegoats in order to attack the government. This raises interesting questions about the wider issues at play and the bias of newspapers.

Secondly, the Leveson Inquiry has included an examination of how the press has portrayed Islam. The evidence and witness statements from the Inquiry reaffirm much of what previous reports and studies have concluded and raise some serious questions about press standards. During the inquiry Richard Peppiatt, a former journalist for the *Daily Star*, admitted that some stories were inaccurate and journalists had often been under pressure from superiors to distort the facts in order to sell more papers. He suggested that competition amongst journalists to get their story to stand out had led to facts being embellished[140]. These are claims that I will return to in this chapter.

The inquiry also examined a number of stories and evidence that Engage[141] and Unitas Communications[142] submitted. This included articles from the *Daily Star*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* that were highlighted as being fabricated. The inquiry felt that there was enough evidence to establish that some quarters of the press were guilty of sensational, unbalanced, careless and at times even reckless reporting[143]. Crucially, the inquiry concluded that the press has significant influence over how parts of society perceive other parts[144]. From this it can be implied that the way in which the press portrays Islam and Muslims can have an impact on public perception.

2.6) Challenges for the press

Peppiatt's claim about journalistic pressures is something that previous reports have raised. The OSCE-ODIHR report examined some of the possible obstacles that journalists face[145]. It concluded that journalists are challenged with tight deadlines and this often means that they do not have the opportunity to do thorough research. Ramadan, also raised this point. He argued that the dictatorship of speed means that there is no time to explain diverse views[146]. Davies also acknowledges this[147].

The OSCE-ODIHR report also commented that journalists continued to lack an understanding of Islam[148] and how to report on issues relating to diversity[149].

The ISD echoed the need for more Muslim voices. It concluded that more Muslims were needed within the media sphere to help educate and change the perception of Islam[150]. However, Muslim journalists should not become pigeonholed into just reporting on stories connected to Muslims, as Petley and Richardson warned[151].

Petley and Richardson also argued that it is important to remember that those who work in the media are not short of codes of practice[152]. They highlight three particular codes, which are worth bearing in mind when analysing newspaper reports. Firstly, Clause 12 of the PCC code for Editors which states that unnecessary references to a person's race, colour or religion should be avoided[153]. Secondly, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) code of conduct which states that journalists should report information honestly, accurately and fairly. Fact and opinion should be clearly differentiated and no material should be published that could lead to discrimination. It also makes it clear that inaccuracies in reports should be corrected[154]. Finally, the guide published by the Society of Editors and Media Trust. Although this is not a formal code it provides journalists with advice, particularly relating to how to cover stories relating to Islam and Muslims[155].

Although concerns about time constraints and pressures from above do need to be taken seriously, these codes serve as a reminder that journalists have guidance.

2.7) Conclusions

From an examination of the existing literature within this field it is evident that there has been a growing interest in the ways in which Islam and Muslims have been presented in the media. The events of 9/11 and 7/7 have caused people to question twenty-first century media constructs of Islam and Muslims and also the impact that such constructs can have. However the review of literature suggests that such questions were being raised prior to 9/11.

Although there are disagreements about the concept of 'Islamophobia' the term provides a useful set of criteria on which to judge reports and this will be invaluable when analysing the language used within the articles selected for this study.

It is possible to identify, from the prior research, some common themes connected to how Islam and Muslims have been portrayed. This includes images connected to Islam as 'barbaric', 'oppressive', 'a threat' and 'backwards'. It is also apparent that Islam is often viewed as monolithic, there is little or no attempt to understand the diversity of the faith and Muslims are treated as one homogenous group. The review of literature suggests that these themes appear to have formed part of Western literature since the eighth century and have been reused over the centuries. It would also appear that there has been an increasing desire to focus on the more extreme voices, the possible reasons for and implications of this need to be discussed further.

As has been highlighted, there are many complex political, social and financial issues at play with regards to the reasons behind why newspapers present

Muslims and Islam in a particular way. The questions of the role of the editor, pressures from above, time constraints and a lack of education all need to be examined further, especially in the light of the findings of the Leveson Inquiry. It is also evident that the role and value of the PCC needs to be reconsidered.

Whilst there has been an increased interest in how newspapers represent Islam and Muslims the review of literature has demonstrated that few studies have undertaken an examination of both the broadsheets and tabloids over an extended period of time. Such a study will draw on existing research and also contribute to the discussion within this field. It will enable the key themes already identified to be explored further and will help to establish whether 9/11 and 7/7 changed the focus of stories connected to Islam and Muslims. By analysing reporting since 7/7 it will be possible to ascertain whether the media portrayal of Muslims and Islam has changed since the publication of the most recent reports and their action plans.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1) Introduction

Chapter 2 established that there has been an increased interest in how the press represents Islam and Muslims but there is still scope for further study, as the role of the press remains an important issue.

This chapter will discuss the research strategies that will be employed and how data has been collected and interpreted. Any potential limitations or problems with regards to the practical research are highlighted.

3.2) Research strategy

A qualitative research method has been adopted for this study, as it is the most appropriate given the chosen area of focus. Denzin and Lincoln state that qualitative research involves studying "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them"[156]. As this study aims to examine text and language to ascertain the image of Islam and Muslims, a qualitative research method provides a more in-depth exploration and analysis. Articles will be analysed to establish whether common themes are apparent. Thematic analysis allows for the pinpointing and examination themes, and helps to

establish whether there is any pattern in the way in which both the religion and its followers is represented.

As the examination of language will play a pivotal role within this study discourse analysis will be used as it allows for the language used to describe Islam and Muslims to be examined in detail. Central to discourse analysis is the idea that language is not neutral. Instead, language is seen as a set of symbols that describe something and therefore language is laden with meaning. It is this meaning that is of interest when analysing how newspapers present Islam and Muslims; the language used is significant because of what it describes and what is associated with it. As Fowler states, "anything that is …written about the world is articulated from a particular position: language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium'[157]. It is important to understand how the press frame stories about Islam and Muslims in order to understand how this contributes to public perception.

However, qualitative research, by its very nature, implies a degree of bias and personal opinion. An individual's personal preconceptions, value systems and cultural influences can lead to bias and this does need to be taken into account. To minimise the risk of bias this study will also refer to the findings of some of the most influential works within this field. Quantitative research methods will also be employed in order to help substantiate findings.

Qualitative and quantitative research are not mutually exclusive and often studies involve a mixture of the two. Quantitative methods will therefore also

be employed within this research in the form of data connected to newspaper sales, polls, police crime data and data on the coverage of Muslim stories and specific themes within the press. The use of such data will help to establish the influence newspapers might have on the public, the prevalence of stories connected to Islam and Muslims, common themes and also whether Islamophobic crime is on the increase.

As the issue being studied is highly complex and is connected to a number of social and political issues rather than a scientific matter it may not be possible to answer the question posed with a simple yes or no. However, through the research undertaken and the analysis of articles it will be possible to address issues and discover the possible reasons behind why Islam and Muslims are portrayed in a particular way. Through this it will be possible to suggest courses for future action.

3.3) Data collection and interpretation

National daily newspapers were chosen as the area of focus for this research as they have a wider circulation than local newspapers and therefore cover stories that are of national and international interest and would influence larger sections of society. Back issues of many of the national newspapers are easily available through their digital archives, which made accessing stories easier.

It was important that both broadsheets and tabloids were analysed. They differ in style and format and analysing how both these sections of the press present Islam and Muslims will allow for a balanced and fair analysis. Although this meant that an in-depth study was not possible within the confines of this dissertation, it enabled a greater variety of newspapers to be covered. This will be beneficial as it will demonstrate whether certain sections of the press, or indeed certain newspapers, are more likely to cover stories in a particular way. It will enable a study of the types of language used and this will help ascertain whether certain types of language are specific to particular newspapers.

Articles from pre-9/11, 9/11, 7/7 and post 7/7 were collected and analysed. Although a study focused on a very specific time period would have provided the opportunity to examine media portrayals in greater depth it would not have provided the 'big picture'. In order to examine how the newspapers represent Muslims and Islam it is necessary to examine reporting over a long period of time. This allows for greater exploration into key issues and themes and allows for an examination into how stories connected to Islam and Muslims have changed over time. In order to do this it was necessary to collect a large number of articles and use the prior published research. Through an examination of previous studies, useful data was obtained on common themes. It was also possible to identify some articles that had been highlighted as representing Islam in a positive and negative light. This was important so to ensure a balanced analysis. It was possible to analyse these

articles further to establish whether there were common themes and consider the reasons behind the image portrayed.

Using newspaper digital archives and the website 'jouna*listed*'[158], searches were undertaken to identify stories connected to 'Islam' and 'Muslims'. This was a lengthy process but produced a wealth of material, too much to address and document within this study. However, it was possible to identify stories that presented Islam and Muslims positively or negatively. In order to establish whether a story could be regarded as positive or negative the principles of 'open views' and 'closed views' as expounded by the Runnymede Trust were applied. This enabled articles to be narrowed down so that it was possible to examine the language used within each report. From this it was possible to establish particular articles to focus on.

The PCC website[159], also provided articles that could be analysed through its pages on complaints it had received. Searches revealed complaints made about specific articles and also provided information on the outcome of such complaints.

In order to address the question of the influence newspapers have had on public opinion about Islam and Muslims it was necessary to collect quantitative data relating to newspaper sales and incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime. Data was collected from the Audit Bureau of Circulations on newspaper sales over the past thirteen years[160] (see Appendix 4). This ensured that newspaper sales in the years of both 9/11 and 7/7 were included

but also provided an overview of total sales. Although such data does not provide an indication as to whether newspaper readers are influenced by reports it helps provide an indication of how many people purchase a daily national newspaper. This is useful when examining the reach of the written word.

Finally, Home Office data on religious hate crimes[161] and Metropolitan Police data on Islamophobic crimes[162] was also collected in order to examine whether incidents of Islamophobia are increasing (see Appendices 1, 2.1 and 2.2). Although this data does not provide an indication of what has influenced those committing such crimes and, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are issues with the data; it nevertheless provides more information to aid overall analysis.

All links to online articles and reports were correct at the time of compiling this dissertation.

<u>Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion</u>

<u>4.1) Reporting prior to 9/11</u>

After the Cold War it has been argued that there was a shift in media focus onto Islam[163,164]. Events, especially in the seventies, eighties and nineties, beginning with the 1973 Oil Crisis when the members of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries proclaimed an oil embargo, focused the West's attention on Islam.

It has been suggested that the Islamic Revolution in Iran, 1978-1979 became a "major catalyst"[165] in refocusing the Western media's attention on Islam as a perceived 'threat'. A number of incidents connected to militant Islam during the 1980s, including bombings and attacks on US Embassies, such as the 1983 attack on the US Embassy in Beirut, which killed sixty-three people and the Lockerbie disaster of 1988 where Pan Am Flight 103 was destroyed by a bomb killing all 243, 16 crew and 11 people on the ground, bought violence to Europe. In the same year Salman Rushdie published the *Satanic Verses*[166]. The title referred to an alleged group of Qur'anic verses permitting intercessory prayers to three Meccan goddesses. The publication caused major controversy and some Muslims accused Rushdie of blasphemy. Ansari argues that this represented a turning point in British public perceptions of Islam[167]. Age-old prejudices and stereotypes came to the surface and many

newspapers condemned the campaign against the book as an attack by Muslims on core British values.

Notions of Islam as 'primitive' and a 'threat', themes that Said claimed were found in Orientalist thought, came to the fore. This is evidenced in Peregrine Worsthorne's article for *The Sunday Telegraph* in which he declared Islam the "primitive enemy"[168]. A sentiment he was to reassert in 1997 in his article for *The Telegraph* entitled "I believe in Islamophobia"[169]. Worsthorne conjures up an image of Islam as 'backwards' and a 'threat' to Western civilization. Images that, as Said had argued, represented no change from the virulent anti-Islamic polemic of the Middle Ages[170]. Nevertheless, it was easy for him to make such assertions when images had appeared in the news of Rushdie's book being burnt in Bradford. Such images in conjunction with Worsthorne's article serve to portray Muslims as the 'other' and a 'threat' to civilised society. Despite the book burnings being carried out by a small minority of Muslims these can become powerful images, helping to shape public perception of Islam.

The rise of al-Qaeda and the Taliban[171,172], the 1991 Gulf War[173] and the 1993 Trade Centre bombings[174] all focussed media attention on Islam. Although it cannot be suggested that the media refrain from reporting such events, how such events are reported and the way that Islam and Muslims are portrayed within the press in the wake of such events is important if the press is to avoid the charge of helping to stir up hatred. The headlines in the press were no longer about events in far away places but, as Haddad argues, were "about the wounded and the dead from down-town"[175]. It has been claimed

that the reporting of such events has led to an indelible media image of a faith that sanctions violence and fosters motiveless terror[176].

Analysis of reports from this period demonstrates that an image of a monolithic Islam at odds with Western values was re-emerging in some newspapers. This is apparent in *The Sun's* story on 12th November 1991[177] about a primary school in Birmingham that it claimed had removed pigs from the class alphabet so as not to offend Muslims. The article contains many of the stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims that Runnymede highlighted. It made the leap from the actions of one school to the claim that the Government was altering the ABC format to meet the needs of Muslims, citing "A is for Ayatollah, B is for Baghdad, C is for curry…" This was simply untrue.

The story highlights how hostile and stereotypical views of Muslims are used in articles whilst also demonstrating an attack on 'political correctness'. The suggestion that the Government was making such changes implied that Muslims had complained. This implication could give rise to feelings about Muslims threatening traditional British values.

Similar views can be found in an article by Carol Sarler. She states that whilst she is more than happy to see Muslim practices in Muslim countries she does not want to see them in Britain.

"we are supposed to tolerate idiots slaughtering goats in Kensington…and wealthy bigger groups building mosques on streets everywhere (try building a Methodist church in the central square in Riyadh and see how you get on)."[178]

Sarler's choice of wording is intended to highlight the differences, as she perceives them, between Islam and British values. Her use of the term "idiots" is not only offensive but also designed to further present an image of Islam as 'inferior'. The reference to Muslims slaughtering animals in the street is included to paint a picture of Muslims as 'savage'. Her story also serves as an opportunity to attack government policies connected to Britain's acceptance of other faiths and their practices.

Robert Kilroy-Silk penned an equally offensive article in 1995. He claimed that Iraqis were publically cutting off people's hands and that "all Moslems behave with equal savagery"[179]. When the majority of the newspaper's readers are likely to have little or no understanding of the faith it is easy to understand how they could assume that all Muslims behave in such a way. This 'closed view' represents Islam as monolithic and also eloquently highlights the claim made by the Runnymede report, that the press were all too often guilty of making sweeping negative generalisations about Muslims[180].

The PCC responded to concerns about the article by stating that it had been clearly presented as being the view of a columnist and therefore did not represent the paper taking an anti-Muslim view[181]. Although it is true that in a democratic society everyone is entitled to their opinion, there is an important

question to be addressed about whether such opinion pieces should be published. Kilroy-Silk's article serves no other purpose than to attack Islam and Muslims. It raises questions about the need for editors to exercise a degree of responsibility when choosing to publish the views of columnists.

This was not simply an issue within the tabloids. Analysis of the broadsheets uncovers articles that contain similar views. For example, *The Independent* ran an article entitled "Between faith and fanaticism"[182]. In the article Robert Fisk claimed that "Beheadings, amputations, women as subservient – these are manifestations of Islam today". This further highlights the tendency of some newspapers to represent Islam as both 'monolithic' and 'barbaric'. It demonstrates the use of stereotypical images that serve to typify all Muslims as threatening. Whilst there are parts of the world where these practices are evident, to suggest that these are representative of Islam as a whole is simply untrue. There is no attempt to distinguish between the different sects or the variety of practices across the Islamic world.

In the wake of the release of the Runnymede report journalist Polly Toynbee wrote and piece called "In defence of Islamophobia: Religion and State"[183]. She stated that she "judged Islam on its deeds". This is a further example of how some journalists fail to see Islam as anything other than monolithic. Whilst she admitted that she might also have the same view of Judaism and Christianity the focus of her article was Islam. Her article referred to the treatment of women, which she used to highlight inequality. Although she did state that it would be unfair to blame some moderate British Muslims for the

behaviour of some Islamic nations she went on to suggest that they could have demonstrated against the fatwa that had been issued on Rushdie.

This highlights how the press often use 'stock stories' about Islam. Her reference to women in Islam is just one of four 'stock stories' that the Runnymede report claimed were often repeated in the press[184]. Such stories of women being oppressed serve to demonstrate the press' portrayal of Islam as being 'backwards' and 'misogynistic'. They fail to recognise that women in Islam were afforded many rights that their Western counterparts had to fight for well into the twentieth century, such as inheritance rights.

Her reference to Rushdie serves to remind readers of the past and stir up old feelings to help reinforce the image of Islam that she wants to create. If she wanted to truly judge Islam on its deeds then she should have provided a balanced judgement. Toynbee fails to discuss any examples of the positive contributions that Islam and Muslims have made, especially in the fields of science and mathematics.

Another reoccurring theme that began to take hold in the 1990s was that of 'fundamentalism'. The term is, as Said argued, a "slippery concept"[185]. It was originally used in connection to someone who chose to follow the fundamentals of their faith but took on a new meaning in the press when it became inextricably linked to Islam and terrorism.

The increased use of the term was evidenced in Runnymede's research. It searched *The Telegraph* online archives from November 1994 to May 1997 and discovered that a total of 194 stories contained the term. 142 of those stories used the term in connection with Islam[186]. The reoccurring use of the term in articles is unhelpful. It positions Islam as an inherently violent religion and is an image that, as discussed in Chapter 2, dates back to the Crusades. It disregards the fact that other religions also have fundamentalist or terrorist groups. For example the IRA from 1969-1997 conducted an armed paramilitary campaign in both Northern Ireland and England in an attempt to end British rule in Ireland. As Desai points out, their actions did not lead to the assumption that all Christians are given to bombing[187]. However, as Kumar argues, when it comes to attacks committed by those who are Muslim there is an immediate linking of their behaviour to Islam as a whole[188].

There was a growing amount of discussion during this period about the way in which Islam and Muslims were being portrayed. A BBC news article in 1998 raised this very concern and questioned whether the UK press was helping to fuel Islamophobia[189]. It suggested that the terrorist attacks of the 1980s and 1990s were causing Muslims concern as they felt it reflected badly on the religion. From an analysis of the articles presented in this section their concern would appear valid. It is evident that all too often Islam, prior to 9/11, was being manipulated in to whatever the newspapers wanted it to mean, a sentiment echoed by Karim[190]. The overarching image that was being created was that Muslims were 'intolerant', 'violent', 'cruel' 'misogynistic' and 'other'. Although, it cannot be stated that the media was directly responsible for the

public perception of Islam it can certainly be argued that it played a role, a sentiment echoed by Campbell[191].

The BBC report went on to suggest that the media, in its search for a good story, would often overlook moderate Muslim views in favour of those who could provide sensational sound bytes. This claim will be explored further as part of the analysis of newspaper reports connected to 9/11 and 7/7, when the actions of suicide bombers gave rise to a range of Muslim voices in the press.

4.2) Analysis of the reporting of 9/11 and its aftermath

"The terrible and tragic events of September 11th have opened a

Pandora's Box of questions about Islam."[192]

These were the sentiments of Akbar Ahmed in an article for *The Guardian*. The impact of 9/11 on the world's landscape should not be underestimated. The images of terror were shocking and invaded every home in the UK[193].

Frequently, for those who report such events things appear to suddenly come out of nowhere. When this happens naturally people attempt to link the event with something familiar so to enable the human mind to understand what has happened[194]. 9/11 placed Islam under scrutiny and the press had a key role to play on addressing the events and the understandable questions that arose.

Victor Navasky contends that it is when traumatic events like 9/11 happen that the "mainstream media show their colors."[195]

During a talk at London's Central Mosque in 2002 Brian Whitaker, the then Middle East editor for *The Guardian*, said that it is difficult to discuss coverage of Islam in the media without referring to 9/11[196]. This demonstrates the pivotal role that 9/11 has had to play in discussions about the press' portrayal of Islam. Research carried out by Bromley and Cushion into UK newspaper sales in the direct aftermath of 9/11 demonstrated that 13 million people purchased a national newspaper every day[197]. As the IHRC report found, there was a rise during this time in stories connected to Muslims[198]. Whilst this rise is to be expected in the wake of 9/11, the question is to what degree the reports represented balanced journalism that did not contain the forms previously highlighted in the Runnymede report as being negative and Islamophobic.

For Al Aswar, one of the negative consequences of 9/11 was the "deformation of the image of Islam in the Western media"[199]. Analysis of articles published from September - November 2001 will enable the validity of this statement to be ascertained.

Analysis of articles produced immediately after 9/11 demonstrates that there were some good examples of balanced and responsible journalism and the desire, at least amongst some quarters, to highlight that the attacks did not represent Islam as a whole.

The Sun ran a front-page headline on September 13th declaring, "Islam is not an evil religion"[200]. It could be argued that this is stating the obvious but it is valuable in as it attempts to disassociate all Muslims from the behaviour of a small group. This represents a positive move away from the 'closed view' of all Muslims being associated with violence and demonstrates a degree of responsible reporting in the wake of 9/11.

Some broadsheets also used 9/11 to attempt to educate readers about Islam. *The Guardian* published a weeklong series on Muslim Britain. *The Telegraph* produced a sixteen page supplement on Islam which was acknowledged by Inayat Bungawala, media secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), as 'perhaps the most extensive and positive look at the British Muslim community that had appeared in a national newspaper."[201]

These are valuable positive examples of how there were sections of the press who used their role as information providers responsibly. However, whilst following 9/11 many newspapers had used their columns to defend Islam and British Muslims, there appears a disproportionate amount of space devoted to more negative stories. This has led some to claim that 9/11 exacerbated and fed the growth of Islamophobia[202].

To effectively analyse the press' reporting of 9/11 and its aftermath one needs to go beyond the early newspaper articles.

The notion of the 'threat within' is clearly evidenced in a wider analysis of articles published throughout September to November. For example, Michael Gove, who at the time was a journalist for *The Times*, warned that those willing to take over from bin Laden were already here "in their thousands"[203]. This adds to the 'moral panic' and can plant the suggestion that Muslims are not to be trusted.

As questions about the attacks grew and concern for national security heightened reports of this nature seem to appear to have been regularly published. Almost two months after 9/11, Melanie Phillips wrote an article in *The Sunday Times* claiming that Britain had a "fifth column in our midst"[204]. It repeated Gove's rhetoric and warned that thousands of young British Muslims were waiting to destroy the very society that was sustaining them. These two pieces from *The Times* demonstrate the key themes of 'threat' and 'extremism' that Elgamri argued feature heavily in the broadsheets[205].

Such articles do little to quell fears and clearly position Muslims as 'untrustworthy' and the 'enemy'. All Muslims are placed under suspicion and this fails to promote community cohesion. This positioning of 'us' and 'them' appears to form a key element of the post 9/11 narrative. It creates what Stanley Cohen termed 'moral panic'[206] where the public comes to fear the breakdown of society. The use of blanket generalisations, where all Muslims are linked with violence means Islam becomes viewed as a religion that is out of control by virtue of the fact that it has produced a bin Laden. Again, as demonstrated in the analysis of reporting prior to 9/11, there appears to be

evidence of journalists ignoring the fact that there are many terrorist groups in the world and not all of them are Muslim[207].

An analysis of newspaper headlines demonstrates that many were often sensationalised in order to reinforce panic. *The Times*, provides such an example. The headline for an article that referred to then Prime Minister Tony Blair's calls not to associate the events of 9/11 with Islam but rather only with terrorists read, "No refuge for Islamic terrorists"[208]. The headline was completely counter to the article and appears to have been used for its sensationalist quality. The article serves to reinforce previous assertions about the tendency to preface any stories connected to terrorism committed by al-Qaeda with the word 'Islam' in a way that does not happen with other terrorist groups. The repeated connection of the two terms mean that they become synonymously linked in the mind of the reader.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many previous reports have commented on how the press tend to give the views of extremist figures prominent space[209,210,211,212]. It has also been evidenced by Poole, who used the example of the decision of newspapers to cover a pro bin Laden march and not a peace rally to demonstrate the desire of the media to cover the more sensational[213].

In the wake of 9/11 members of the MCB met with editors and senior staff of many of the newspapers to urge them to give greater coverage to more mainstream views. Inayat Bungawala has argued that the media fuelled fear

about Muslims and Islam during this period by seeking out the views of fringe elements, allowing them to air their views and then using this as an opportunity to attack Islam as a whole[214].

Poole's research indicated that both the broadsheets and tabloids frequently used Abu Hamza to the extent where he had become the most featured British Muslim[215]. Muir and Smith's research also indicated that he had been a particular favourite of the *Daily Mail*[216]. Such repeated use serves many purposes. He is the ultimate 'cartoon baddy' with his hooked hand and missing eye making him the ideal 'enemy'. His claimed association with the Taliban serves to reinforce the idea that there are Muslims in Britain who have terrorist links. His extreme views provide the sensational sound bytes that, as has already been discussed, some claim newspapers go in search of. He serves to reinforce the image that the newspaper wished to project, namely the notion of Islam as an 'evil' religion. His use also serves as a way to attack the Government's policy on immigration and benefits. Something that Baker *et al* assert are often key themes in tabloid stories[217]. Therefore, it does not appear to be coincidental that he became a particular favourite of the *Daily Mail*. Moderate voices were available but perhaps these would not serve the wider agenda of the newspaper and would not have the required impact.

This is not to say that the views of such figures should not be covered but it is when the press report these views as representative of all Muslims that issues begin to arise. Readers can erroneously believe that such figures speak for all Muslims.

"It is akin to taking a member of the racist BNP and saying his views are representative of ordinary Britons."[218]

Despite those initial reports that had attempted to separate the attacks from Islam, much of what followed in the coming months demonstrates journalist's failure to provide any historical or political context for the attacks. Instead many quarters of the press seem to have firmly linked 9/11 to Islamic belief, suggesting that belief in Islam was the core motivation for such behaviour[219].

This view is evident in *The Times*, which published Baroness Thatcher's blanket condemnation of all Muslims[220]. She claimed that all Muslims should share the responsibility for 9/11. To make such an accusation demonstrates a distinct lack of understanding. Furthermore, her accusation that British Muslims have failed to condemn the attacks was false. Within three hours of the attacks the MCB issued a press release condemning 9/11[221]. *The Times*, in publishing her comments, appeared to ignore this, or at least heavily underplay the facts, something that Petley highlighted in his research[222].

The Telegraph, which had previously been praised for its publication on British Muslims, also published articles that firmly connected Islam with terrorism. Patrick Sookhdoe's, 'A religion that sanctions violence'[223], claimed that whilst Christianity does not justify the use of all forms of violence, Islam does. This is another example of setting Islam and Christianity apart, positioning Christians as 'educated' and Muslims as 'blood-thirsty'. Columnist

David Selbourne's warning that 'This war is not about Terror, it's about Islam'[224] only serves to further make it appear that public fears about Islam were justified. From the tone of both these articles it could be argued that *The Telegraph* was helping to fuel the 'moral panic' of Islam as the 'threat within'.

Carol Sarler in the *Daily Express* claimed, "every Moslem state in the world today is a cauldron of violence"[225]. The fact that she was able to make such a statement conflicted with her claim she could not voice concerns about Islam. A complaint was made to the PCC but it was not upheld as it was argued the piece was clearly the view of the columnist[226]. This again raises questions about the value of the PCC especially if they do not address complaints about the views of columnists. The charge of responsible journalism should apply to columnists.

Similar sentiments can be found in Polly Toynbee's "Last chance to speak out"[227] published in *The Guardian*. Whilst it should be noted that she did acknowledge the fact that Islam has a wide range of spectrums and that Margaret Thatcher's accusations had been completely false, the main sentiment of her article was that Islam was 'bloodthirsty', a claim which it has already been demonstrated was a theme that has appeared in Western literature from the very earliest of interactions between Christians and Muslims. Her article reiterated her previous distaste for Islam and used selective Qur'anic verses and particular interpretations to back up her views.

Analysis of the article highlights a number of serious issues. Firstly, she claims that the words of Muhammad are an incitement to kill non-Muslims. She cites the verse "Kill those who join other gods" as her evidence and claims that this verse is to be found in *Surah 6:5-6*. However, the quote does not come from the *Surah* she reports but is from *Surah 9:5*. Anyone who took the time to check her references would have uncovered this error and potentially called into question the validity of her piece. Such an error demonstrates a lack of Qur'anic knowledge by both Toynbee and the editor who allowed the article to go to print. The average reader would probably not have knowledge of the Qur'an and would assume her account to be correct. The fact that she is citing Qur'anic quotes gives the impression that she must have a degree of authority on the matter.

Secondly, she shortens the quote to meet her own needs, failing to explain any of the historical context behind the verse that was revealed after some of the pagan tribes had reneged on a peace treaty. This is a point that Oborne and Jones highlight in their analysis[228]. Toynbee not only fails to reference this but also chooses to ignore the next part of the revelation that commands that those who repent should be forgiven. If Toynbee had taken the time to read the verse in full and the accompanying notes that can be found in Qur'anic publications, such as that of Abdullah Yusuf Ali[229], she would have seen that she had failed to understand it. However, equally it could be argued that maybe she chose not to address this, as it did not fit with the image of Islam that she held and wanted to convey.

Instead, Toynbee chooses to reference another verse that she believes supports her view. She erroneously cites the verse "crucify or cut the hands and feet if the unbelievers" as being from *Surah 5:34* when it is found in *Surah 5:33*. Again, she omits to give the reader the background behind the revelation, namely that it was revealed at a time when a war had been launched against Islam. She also fails to reference any of the next passages that stress that mercy should be shown to those who repent. The result is an article that serves no value other than to provide the erroneous view of Islam as a religion that sanctions violence.

If newspapers are going to use extracts from the Qur'an then they have a duty to ensure that sources are checked thoroughly and that any scriptural references are fully explained within the historical and political context that they were revealed in. It raises questions about whether the agenda of the journalists and the newspaper take precedence over the truth and whether journalists know enough about the subject matter that they are writing about. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are codes that provide journalists and editors with guidance.

During Oborne and Jones' analysis of the article, Toynbee stated that she could not remember how she came about the quotes. She said she had learnt a great deal since 9/11 and would not write a similar article again[230]. Despite this the original article remains accessible on *The Guardian* website for anyone to reuse and none of the errors have been corrected. This is evidence of how the written word can be long lasting.

Toynbee is not alone in pointing the blame at Islam as a whole. Hugo Young in *The Guardian* claims that the "unforgiveable act against humanity sprang from a version of Islam that only Islam can set about repudiating"[231]. The MCB had already condemned the attacks and to suggest that it was the sole responsibility of Islam to address the issues raised by 9/11 fails to demonstrate an understanding of the broader issues. Whilst, journalist Rageh Omaar admits that British Muslims do need to confront ignorance about Islam[232], it is difficult to do so when the press readily report Islam and Muslims through a series of snapshots. A wall of words is created that become a barrier to inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue.

Lastly, evidence to support the claim that the media re-uses Orientalist themes can clearly be found in John Keegan's, "In this war of civilisations, the West will prevail"[233]. Keegan claimed that the War on Terror belonged within the far older conflict between "settled, creative productive Westerners and predatory, destructive Orientals." He argued that one could not pretend "peoples of the desert… exist on the same level of civilisation." Not only does this article contain 'closed views' that present Islam as 'backwards' and 'savage' but it also contains the stereotypical image that Muslims live in the desert. It could give the reader the false impression that all Muslims are Arabs. It disregards the fact that there are Muslim communities worldwide and large percentages live nowhere near a desert.

From this analysis it is clear that newspaper coverage of 9/11 and its aftermath was widespread and diverse. Some reports demonstrate the use of Muslim stereotypes, whilst others demonstrate a worrying lack of understanding. Whilst some newspapers tried to present a more positive view of Islam and challenge misconceptions, many of these were then also guilty of producing reports that played on public fear. The analysis has also demonstrated that many of the most venomous attacks came from columnists and this has raised questions about the content of such opinion pieces and the decisions of editors to publish them.

Although it is not possible to claim all material from this period was anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim, if one applies the theory of 'closed views', expounded by the Runnymede Trust, it is possible to assert that much of the material produced could be deemed to be Islamophobic, a conclusion that is affirmed by Ansari[234].

4.3) Analysis of the reporting of 7/7 and its aftermath

It has been argued that the London bombings on July 7th 2005 represented a defining moment in the evolution of the public's attitude towards Islam and Muslims[235]. 7/7 brought starkly home fears that had existed in the minds of the British public and that had been played out in newspaper columns since 9/11. The attack on the heart of London was evidence that the 'threat within' was truly here.

Just as they had been in 2001, the press was challenged with the need to quickly inform readers of the events as they unfolded. Would the themes that dominated the coverage of 9/11 reappear? Had journalists become better educated about Islam?

Analysis of articles from 7/7 and the months that followed demonstrates a range of reports, from those that sought to distinguish the acts of the bombers from Islam to those that resorted to stereotypical images and even those which appear to have been completely fabricated.

Firstly, it is important to emphasise that it is possible to find evidence that some quarters of the press did make the effort to distance the bombers from Islam. Something that was echoed in the EUMC findings[236]. Whilst this could have been due to government pressure to ensure calm[237] it is nevertheless encouraging to see the media attempting to show Muslims in a positive light and move away from the image that all Muslims support violence.

For example, the day after 7/7 *The Guardian* published an article stating "Religion has no part in this"[238]. It stressed that Islam does not sanction violence and pointed to the fact that one in seven Londoners was a Muslim.

A further article emphasising this can be found in *The Independent*, which ran the story of Muslim victim Shahara Akther Islam[239]. It referred to her as a "devout Muslim" who had her life ahead of her. She is represented as the

embodiment of multi-cultural Britain. The article is valuable as it demonstrates that many young British Muslims are embracing Western culture. It highlights how Muslims were also victims of the attacks; making a clear distinction between British Muslims and the bombers. It was a very well timed piece as questions were being asked about who had been responsible for the attacks and the article stresses the need to not associate the actions of a few with the majority.

There was also an effort to highlight the fear within the Muslim community that the attacks could result in an anti-Muslim backlash. *The Guardian* ran an article about the abuse that some Muslims had already faced and contained interviews with Muslims condemning 7/7[240],[241]. The paper ran a similar article after it was revealed that the bombers were thought to have been British Muslims[242]. It reiterated the need for calm and contained a statement from the MCB denouncing the attacks and stating its resolve to bring those involved to justice. The next day a further article stressed the need to see the Muslim community as allies. Melanie Bunting's article spoke of what an agonising time she felt it must be to be a British Muslim[243]. Her article demonstrated empathy for Muslims and the challenges that they faced in the wake of 7/7. It also stressed the need for everyone to work together to better understand each other and look for common ground.

These articles demonstrate that *The Guardian* was attempting to ally fears and trying to ensure that Muslims were not seen as targets of abuse.

The *Daily Express* also attempted to show that the actions of some young British Muslims was not a reflection on the whole Muslim community. Its coverage of boxer Amir Khan's plea to members of the Muslim community to report anyone associated with the attacks[244] demonstrated how the bombers beliefs were not representative of all young Muslim men. It also portrayed a young British Muslim male as a positive role model, valuable at a time when Muslim men were particularly under the microscope.

However, as was evidenced in the analysis of reporting after 9/11, the real test is whether the initial response of the press translates into the long term, especially after the bombers were identified as British. It is in this analysis that it is possible to find many of the similar themes that appeared in the reporting of 9/11.

An example of the press playing on fears can be found in Kevin Toolis' piece in the *Daily Mirror*[245]. He outlines what Britain would look like if ruled by "Islamic fanatics". He paints a picture of Britons living under a strict dress code and where hangings and stonings would be taking place at Wembley Stadium. The piece serves no purpose other than to feed people's fears, adding to the panic and division. It also uses the common narratives of Islamic dress and capital punishment that are all too evident in stereotypical images of Islam. These 'stock images' demonstrate the idea of Islam as 'oppressive' and 'violent', images that, as discussed in Chapter 2, have been identified as often being used in 'closed views'.

Once it had been revealed that the bombers were British Muslims understandably there were many questions connected to why they would want to carry out such attacks and whether the attacks were representative of Islam as a whole. Questions of loyalty and trustworthiness began to arise and these were explored in many sections of the press. Themes connected to integration, radicalisation and betrayal of the home nation are all evidenced in an analysis of press coverage from this period, as was highlighted in the findings of the EUMC report[246].

The *Daily Express*, for example, began to give details about who the bombers were. The issue on July 14th had the front-page headline "HOW MANY MORE?"[247] with the article suggesting that there were many more young Muslim men waiting to launch similar attacks. Admittedly it would be naive and counter to the evidence to suggest that the four bombers were the only young British Muslims who held such views but it does raise questions about whether the headline does not simply serve to add to the panic of the time. The article stressed that the culprits appeared 'normal'. This only further creates an air of suspicion about British Muslims and makes people question whether they can trust their Muslim neighbours. This does little to appease people's fears or promote community cohesion.

The Telegraph also reasserted the image of Islam as 'violent'. In Charles Moore's opinion piece he refers to the Qur'an as proof that Islam sanctions violence[248]. In a tactic similar to Toynbee he selects a verse from the Qur'an to prove his point. He quotes *Surah 8:12* as commanding Muslims to cut off

the heads and fingertips of infidels. He fails to explain the context of the verse or that there are other passages within the *Surah* that discuss the need to show mercy. The revelation came after the Battle of Badr in 624 CE, which had been between the Muslims and Meccan pagan tribes. The verse that Moore cites was with reference to those parts of the body most susceptible during battle. It does not represent an incitement to all Muslims to go around cutting the limbs off of non-Muslims. Moore fails to mention that there are verses in the Old Testament that could be read in a similar way, such as the command to "kill both man and woman, child and infant", *1 Samuel 15:3*. It could be argued that this is another example of the facts being ignored because they do not serve the point of the piece in question. It also demonstrates the tendency to only connect Islam with violence.

There is also evidence of a focus on more extreme figures. Stories connected to Omar Bakri Muhammad appear to have been a particular favourite of The *Daily Express*. An analysis of their digital archive[249] from 8 July to the end of the year demonstrates that he appeared in 28 stories, with the highest concentration of references to him being from 7 - 18 August where he was referred to everyday. Pieces ranged from him stating that he rejoiced at the killings[250] to articles connected to the amount he was receiving in benefits[251]. It could be argued that such coverage may give readers the impression the he is representative of all Muslims, just as it was claimed that the use of Abu Hamza after 9/11 led to people assuming he represented the voice of Islam. It also demonstrates the continued tendency to focus on the extreme characters that will provide a sensational view. This raises questions about the agenda of

those who own the newspapers. Muir and Smith uncovered such evidence in their interviews with Muslim reporters[252]. It is also something that was raised by the ISD[253]. The pressures of the newsroom, accounts and advertising departments to present the sensational was also something that Peppiatt raised as a concern in his submission to the Leveson Inquiry[254].

Stories connected to Omar Bakri can also be used to raise questions about immigration, and benefits. The *Daily Express* is regarded as being politically aligned with the Conservative Party; applying Baker *et al*'s theory of political allegiances it could be argued that Omar Bakri provided the newspaper with an opportunity to attack 'New' Labour policies on asylum and immigration. In this sense, as Baker *et al* assert, Muslims become the scapegoat[255] within a wider debate.

This is also evidenced in "BOMBERS ARE ALL SPONGEING ASYLUM SEEKERS"[256] which contained a telephone poll on whether all asylum seekers should be "sent back". The Muslim Association of Britain highlighted this story as evidence that some newspapers were spreading hatred. It argued that such an article could be dangerous and cause an anti-Muslim backlash[257]. Whilst it is not possible to prove that such reports are directly responsible for the attacks on Muslims after 7/7 they certainly risk exacerbating tensions and stir up anxieties and prejudices, making integration difficult.

It would be wrong to claim the *Daily Express* did not cover positive stories and stories related to the abuse that Muslims received, such as evidenced in its edition on 11 July [258], but these stories often appear to have been placed deeper within the newspaper. News, for example, that Muslim leaders had met with then Prime Minister Tony Blair and vowed to "root out evil"[259] was tucked away at the bottom of page eight and nine, below a story continued from the front page about Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi [260] which contained a statement from Omar Bakri stating that the re-election of Tony Blair had led to the attacks [261]. There were no pictures of any of the leaders meeting with the Prime Minister, unlike the pictures of Omar Bakri and al-Qaradawi that could be found in the article above. This suggests that a careful choice had been made as to which story would be the focus. For this reason a story about fringe Muslims, willing to provide a sensational sound byte, was considered more newsworthy than that of Muslims condemning 7/7. When reports are styled in this way it is the negative story that gets the readers attention and shapes their opinion.

The Sun suggested on 25 July, "British Muslims are waking up to the threat in our midst"[262]. This gives the impression that it took over two weeks for Muslims to start to address the issues that 7/7 had presented. Whilst it has been claimed that 7/7 uncovered a range of problems at the heart of British Muslim society[263] it cannot be argued that Muslims were only just 'waking up' to these issues. Such a claim is counter to the fact that the MCB immediately spoke out condemning the attacks and called on British Muslims to give information about those responsible to the police[264]. Nevertheless, despite

these facts, a similar claim appears in the *Daily Express* four days later stating, "Muslim leaders must rebuke men of hate."[265]

Some reports from this period also demonstrated a lack of understanding concerning Islamic beliefs, especially the concept of *jihad*. In an article for the *Daily Mail* it was stated that, "jihad - holy war – is a central tenet of Islamic theology"[266]. Whilst *jihad* is an important religious duty to claim that it simply means holy war is erroneous. *Jihad* means 'struggle' and involves the struggle to fulfil religious duties, known as greater *jihad*, and the struggle to build a worldwide Muslim community, known as lesser *jihad*. Although a holy war can be called, it is only under the strictest of conditions. This is not explained in the article and hence the association between *jihad* and war becomes linked in readers' minds. If journalists are going to use such terms they must make an effort to understand what they really mean. Journalists should also explain that the concept of holy war is not unique to Islam. A brief search of the Internet would provide journalists with a wealth of material on the origins of holy war and *jihad*[267, 268, 269]. Even with the claimed time constraints it would not take journalists long to access such information.

This one-dimensional view of Islam is also evident within other reports. In the *Daily Express* Julia Hartley-Brewer makes the same connection[270]. Her article paints the idea of Islam as 'backward'. She claims that Islam is "stuck in the Dark Ages" and unlike Western culture has failed to adapt to twenty-first century life. With articles such as this and in the light of the bombings it becomes increasingly difficult for the Muslim community to counter such views. Representing Muslims in such broad brushstrokes [271] in stories

connected to fundamentalism and a clash of civilisations do nothing to move beyond the historical image of Islam and fail to educate readers about the diversity of the faith.

Finally, analysis of articles from this period demonstrates that certain quarters of the press fabricated stories. This is a serious charge, but in an analysis of two particular stories that appeared in the *Daily Express*, it is a charge that should be taken seriously.

The newspaper ran a front-page story on 24 October about piggy banks being banned[272]. It proclaimed, "Now the PC brigade bans piggy banks in case they upset Muslims". The truth was very different.

NatWest had held a savings campaign that had featured piggy banks in their posters. When the campaign ended they removed the posters. It was not due to Muslims being offended by the pigs. NatWest denied that there was any truth in the claims when they had been contacted by a local newspaper but the next day it appeared as a front-page *Daily Express* headline. No one from the *Daily Express* has contacted NatWest to check the claims validity, if they had done they would have realised it was a non-story. Despite this a further piece on the campaign to save piggy banks was published two days later[273].

This leads to many questions about the practices of journalists. It also raises the question about whether there was more behind the story. Perhaps, with

the heightened interest in Islam, it was no accident that Muslims had been included.

Just over a week later another story appeared that had a similar format. It claimed "Christmas is banned: It offends Muslims"[274]. The report suggested that Lambeth Council had ordered the Christmas lights to be called 'winter lights' so not to offend Muslims. The article in fact went on to include a statement from Bungawala stating that Muslims were not offended, clearly counter to the headline.

The story originated from an article in the local press the day before by Greg Truscott[275]. His article made no reference to Muslims being the cause of the suggested name change. It would therefore appear that the *Daily Express* had taken the story and twisted it for its own means, a suggestion that Peppiatt was to reinforce in his submission to the Leveson Inquiry when he stated that journalists at the *Daily Star*, which is the *Daily Express'* sister newspaper, produced inaccurate stories and had been under pressure to distort facts just to sell papers[276]. Lambeth Council had not been contacted prior to the article going to print and even after the Council released a statement saying that the story was ridiculous The *Daily Express* did not set the facts straight despite the PCC Editor's Code of Conduct clearly stating under Article 1 that inaccuracies, once recognised, should be corrected[277].

One has to question whether this is evidence of members of the press adding the word "Muslim" just to sell papers. It is also interesting to note that in the

article about piggy banks there had been a statement from the Dean of Blackburn stating "The next thing we will be banning Christmas"[278]. Had The *Daily Express* just seen an opportunity for a good story that would play further on people's suspicions about Islam? Allegations such as this cannot be dismissed. This article was recently presented to the Leveson Enquiry into press standards as evidence of story falsification and the tabloid newspapers' campaigns against Muslims[279].

From an analysis of articles from this period it is evident that the ways in which Muslims were conceived and perceived had changed little. In particular those newspapers which had played a role in shaping anti-Muslim feeling in the decades prior appear to have been all too happy to continue in the same vein after 7/7. Key themes such as those connected to Muslims being seen as a 'threat', 'extreme', 'barbaric' and 'other' appeared regularly during this period. Reports from this time also serve to highlight questions about the agendas of both journalists and newspapers especially in relation to stories being fabricated.

4.4) Analysis of reporting since 7/7

In the years since 7/7 stories about Islam and Muslims have continued to feature heavily. How the press reports these stories can give a clearer indication as to whether the press is reporting responsibly, presenting informed debate and not pandering to prejudices. However, there appears to

be a continued trend to present Islam and Muslims in a negative light. As discussed in Chapter 2, studies have indicated that the language used in connection to Islam and Muslims continued to be emotive, alarmist and abusive. Muslims continued to be perceived as a 'threat' and facts are often distorted. With data on Islamophobic crimes suggesting that since 7/7 there has been a rise in attacks on Muslims, the press has the responsibility to ensure that it is not fuelling anti-Muslim sentiment.

Within the confines of this study it is impossible to provide a detailed examination of all the stories that have been published since 2006. However, it is possible to explore some of the most prominent stories that have contained what Runnymede described as 'unfounded' content.

Firstly, as has been evidenced within the previous sections of this chapter, it is possible to find articles that sought to portray Muslims in a positive light. A good example of this can be found in *The Independent*. In the lead up to the first anniversary of 7/7 it ran an article about a young Muslim from Britain who had been killed whilst fighting for the British Army in Afghanistan. The article headlined "Lance Corporal Jabron Hashmi: Born in Pakistan, raised in Birmingham, killed in Afghanistan"[280] painted the image of a young Muslim proud to be fighting for his country, who desired nothing more than to help promote cultural understanding. The article helps to counter the image, played out in some sections of the press after 7/7, of British Muslim men being a 'threat' ready to join al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Here was a story about a young man proud to be Muslim but also proud to fight for Britain. The article

was published the day before the 7/7 anniversary, when people no doubt would be thinking of attacks and be reminded of the 'threat within'. In a time of increased security and suspicion the article helped to remind readers that the actions of a few are not representative of the whole Muslim community.

The Sun also ran a similar article called "Muslim heroes fight for UK"[281]. It reinforced the "significant part" that Muslims were contributing to the British armed forces in helping to "provide visible support for the assertion that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are not wars against Islam."

Jonathan Freedland, writing for *The Guardian*, produced a highly thought provoking piece about how the media fuelled hysteria about Muslims. In "If this onslaught was about Jews, I would be looking for my passport"[282] Freedland spoke about his sympathy for Muslims who he claimed must "dread….walking into a newsagents." In response to an article written two weeks previous by Jack Straw regarding his claim that when speaking to a veiled woman he felt "uneasy"[283] which had sparked debate about the veil Freedland said that Muslims must wonder:

"What will they be saying about us today? Will we be under assault for the way we dress? Or the schools we go to, or the mosques we build? Who will be on the front page: a terror suspect, a woman in a veil or, the best of both worlds, a veiled terror suspect."

Although Freedland agreed that each of the aforementioned topics could, on their own produce thoughtful debate he argued that when put together they have created a "perfectly irrational mood: a kind of drumbeat of hysteria." He blamed both politicians and the media for such hysteria because they had pounded Muslims "as if they represented the single biggest problem in national life." Freedland argued that the media needed to do more to distinguish between radical violent Islamism and mainstream Islam. He also paralleled the actions of those who committed the 7/7 attacks with that of the IRA, stating that no one had ever called for all Britain's Irish to march out and condemn the IRA so why should people expect British Muslims to do so.

Despite these stories there is a wealth of evidence of a continued tendency to present 'closed views' and the continuation of the idea of the Muslim 'threat' to the British way of life.

One such example comes from an article by Gabriel Milland for the *Daily Express*. The article claimed "MUSLIMS 'BAN' UN-ISLAMIC SCHOOLS"[284]. The opening sentence stated that the MCB was setting out "DEMANDS" for a ban on "un-Islamic" activities in schools. The article contains a number of inaccuracies that raise further questions about the ethics of the press.

Firstly, the publication by the MCB[285] that the article referred to, aimed to provide information, guidance and supportive advice, at no point in the publication were any demands made. The use of such a word, which was capitalised so to add emphasis and draw attention, suggests that the MCB

was forcing such changes. It gives the impression that Muslims do not wish to integrate. Furthermore, the placing of the term 'un-Islamic' in quotation marks could make the reader think that Milland is directly quoting from the publication when in fact no such term is used. There are further problems with the language he uses. For example, the use of the word "targets" in connection with the areas of focus within the publication is in itself suggestive of aggression on the part of the MCB. Milland also makes no effort to explain what he means by "Taliban-style conditions"; at no point in the publication was there any suggestion that all children should be taught as if they were Muslim and there was no reference to the Taliban. The inclusion of the phrase serves to enhance the overall image of the Muslim 'threat'. The article also contains an error regarding rules surrounding dress for swimming. Milland claims the publication states that when swimming boys should wear clothing covering their bodies "from the navel to the neck." The publication states they should be covered from the navel to the knee. It could be argued that this was a simple mistake but it does lead to questions about what checks articles undergo before being published. Anyone proof-reading the article should have spotted the error. No knowledge of Islamic rules surrounding dress would be required in order to question such a claim.

Many readers might assume that the newspaper was reporting the facts and when presented with such a story the age old 'us' and 'them' narrative comes to the surface. This is apparent in Richardson's findings relating to the public's reaction to the article[286]. In the immediate days that followed 210 comments appeared on the *Express* website, over 190 attacked Islam and Muslims.

Although a few of the comments were from people who appeared to have read the publication and who remarked that the report was erroneous the vast majority were responding purely to what they had read and were hostile towards Muslims. Although some of the underlying feelings contained on the newspaper's website probably existed prior to the article being printed by including negative comments the newspaper reinforced them. This raises questions about the need of editors to monitor the content of online pages more closely.

It is not possible to say that this story is responsible for anti – Muslim feeling but it can be argued that such a story helps to shape public view and does little for social cohesion. It also led to Carol Malone in the *Daily Mirror* suggesting that if Muslims didn't like how British schools were run then they should "shove off somewhere that suits them better – like Afghanistan"[287]. This is not only offensive but also demonstrates how quickly other news outlets can pick up a story.

In October 2006 *The Sun* ran a story that claimed "Muslim yobs" had vandalised a house that four British soldiers returning from Afghanistan had hoped to rent[288]. The article leaves the reader with the impression that Muslims had a vendetta against British soldiers. It plays on the notion of the Muslim 'threat' and reignites the debate about the loyalties of British Muslims. However, there was no proof that any Muslims had been involved in vandalising the house. During their research Oborne and Jones spoke to the local Detective Chief Inspector[289] who stated that the most likely reason for

the crime was due to members of the community not wanting soldiers to move into the area due to fears it might lead to a fall in house prices. Evidence for this had come from the local barracks, which had received anonymous calls the week before the attack from people objecting to the soldiers moving in. Residents had also signed a petition. Following investigations the PCC asked *The Sun* to publish a correction[290]; it did so four months after the story had run[291]. However, the correction at no point actually apologised for the article. When the original article had made it clear that Muslims were involved *The Sun's* correction was a long way from an apology. It was also hidden away on page fourteen; many readers might well have missed the statement. Furthermore, despite there being no evidence of any Muslim involvement the original story, without amendments, is still accessible on *The Sun* website and serves as another reminder of the long lasting impact of the written word. The article was recently submitted to the Leveson Inquiry as evidence of the press' tendency to invent stories about Muslims.

As with the piggy-bank story and the Christmas banned article it acts as further evidence of poor journalistic standards and suggests that newspapers were just 'cashing in' on the increased interest in Islam. This was something that Charlie Beckett raised during his Radio 4 programme *Telling Muslim Stories*[292]. He asked whether increased media interest in Islam was related to the fact that stories about Muslims made money for newspapers. Ben Preston, the then Deputy Editor of *The Times*, admitted that stories about Islam had become more newsworthy. He gave the example of a story that came into the pressroom about Muslims making it more difficult for hospitals

to fight superbugs because they were not using the hand-gel because it had alcohol in it. Preston admitted that such a story would not have "appeared on anyone's agenda a year ago"[293]. Such comments suggest that in the wake of 7/7 there was an increased desire to cover stories connected to Islam and Muslims.

Further examples of turning stories into Muslim stories can be found in a number of articles since 2006. For example, the *Daily Mail* ran a story with the headline "Swimmers plunged into dark after council covers swimming pool windows 'to protect Muslim women's modesty'[294]. The claim was made in relation to Darlaston swimming pool covering its windows with opaque film. The use of quotation marks implied that this was a direct quote yet nowhere in the article was there reference to who had said this. In fact the article contained a comment from Walsall Council stating that they had received complaints predominantly from Muslims but that non-Muslims had also complained about the lack of privacy. This clearly demonstrates that not only Muslims had complained. Nevertheless the story ran as a Muslim story. All the members of the public interviewed were against the decision; no views supporting the decision were included and no members of the Muslim community were asked to comment. This demonstrates a lack of balance. The article serves to reinforce the negative image of Muslims making 'demands' on Britain and not wanting to play an inclusive role in society.

The *Daily Mail* published an article claiming a café owner had won a legal battle to fry bacon after Muslims had complained about the smell[295]. However,

the article provided no evidence that any Muslims had actually complained. The claim that it had offended Muslims had come from Graham Webb-Lee who lived next door to the café. He had complained that the extractor fan was so close to his house that it filled his home with "vile cooking smells" meaning he was no longer able to eat in his kitchen. He claimed that Muslim friends had refused to visit because of the smell. But these claims were unsubstantiated; the article contained no complaints from Muslims. However, the article presents the image of Muslims making 'demands' on Britons and attacking the British way of life. After all what can be more English than an English breakfast!

Another example of Muslims supposedly failing to integrate and making demands can be found in the *Daily Star's* article, "Muslim – only public loos"[296] which was about toilets that had been built in the Rochdale Exchange Shopping Centre. The PCC found this story to be inaccurate and misleading and concluded that it breached the Editor's Code of Practice[297]. Although the article has since been removed from the newspaper's website it is possible to examine it through the PCC case notes[298]. Firstly, the article claimed that the toilets were "Muslim only", this was not true; anyone could use them. Secondly, it claimed that Rochdale Council had wasted "YOUR money" on them. This implied taxpayers had paid for them when the developers had. A correction was printed but again contained no apology and appeared on page two. Former *Daily Star* journalist Richard Peppiatt referred to this article in his submission to the Leveson Inquiry[299]. He argued that it was a good example of how some executives overplayed the strength of a story to please editors

and then tasked a reporter with making the story fit. Peppiatt claimed that the newsline for the toilets story had been decided before all the facts were known and even when the facts came to light they were ignored because they did not fit with the story. This is a serious charge relating to press standards.

The *Daily Express* ran a story about "Muslim plot to kill Pope"[300]. The headline suggested that this was a fact, although the first line of the article stated, "ISLAMIC terrorists disguised as street cleaners allegedly hatched an audacious plot to blow up the Pope." There is a considerable difference between something being alleged and something being fact and newspapers need to be mindful of this. The story was on the front page and then a double page inside the newspaper. However, the men were all released without charge; there had been no plot. The *Daily Express* did print a redress, on page nine, which consisted of one line[301]. Again, such redresses tucked away could easily be missed. When the original story had been given so much space it seems inadequate that the correction was afforded so little. The original story, without correction, is also still available on their website. The story also serves to highlight the press' preference for treating Islam as a monolithic religion. The blanket use of "Muslim" gives the impression that all Muslims could be plotting to kill prominent Christian figures. There is no attempt to distinguish who the alleged plotters are but the image of Islam against Christianity is clearly presented.

It would appear that all too often newspapers publish inaccurate information on their front-pages and then fail to give subsequent clarifications the same

prominence. Engage highlighted this issue[302] with reference to the *Daily Star* story, "Poppies banned in terror hotspots"[303]. The story claimed that poppies had been banned in areas connected to some of the 7/7 bombers and also areas where police had carried out anti-terrorism operations. No such ban was in place and the paper was required to publish a clarification. The clarification appeared on page two, which Engage believed, was lacking given the prominence of the original article.

Perhaps some of the most prominent examples of words and facts being twisted can be found in many articles related to the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams' comments about *Shari'ah* law, made during a lecture he gave to the Temple Foundation[304]. He raised the issue of the conflicting loyalties that communities might have and of "supplementary jurisdictions" to civil law. He spoke of all faiths and noted the anxieties people might have about *Shari'ah* law. He condemned brutal punishments sanctioned in some countries but felt that the accommodation of some religious laws was relevant to all faiths.

Journalists had access to the press release, lecture transcript and the transcript from his radio appearance. Although as George notes, the press release did require careful reading because there was no summary[305], it was clear that William's was not proposing a parallel Islamic legal system in Britain. Despite this, Williams became the subject of press furore as his words were twisted and splashed across front-pages in the days that followed. Research by Moore *et al* found that between 7 -14 February 252 articles

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related to his speech appeared. Much of what was written was inaccurate and tended to focus on *Shari'ah* as barbaric and violent. They found that 52% of played on the notion of Islam as a threat to Britain[306].

Although the newspapers were all critical of Williams there is a noticeable difference in how some of the broadsheets covered this issue compared to the tabloids.

The Independent's, "Archbishop ignites Sharia law row"[307] was critical of Williams but not hostile, unlike many tabloids. However, it did contain a comment from Alistair McBay, spokesperson for the National Secular Society, who stated "all citizens are equal under the law and the Archbishop's comments directly undermine this". McBay had clearly misunderstood what William's had said. It is not possible from the article to ascertain whether McBay had read the lecture notes and press release or whether he was commenting on the issue purely based on what others had said. Regardless, the article erroneously gives the impression that Williams had called for the implementation of *Shari'ah*.

The Guardian took a similar stance[308,309]. It did make an effort to briefly explain what *Shari'ah* involves, stating that it "sets out a broad code of conduct for all aspects of life, from diet, wearing of *hijab* to marriage and divorce". Its choice of these examples is interesting as they contain images that often strike a chord with the Western imagination of women who are veiled, oppressed and suppressed and that this oppression is justified within

Qur'anic teachings. The veil itself is a topic that often appears in newspapers and the laws surrounding marriage and divorce are also commonly cited issues. It could be argued that the newspaper is playing on the public's misconceptions, citing such examples because of the response it knows they will receive. There is no mention of the laws surrounding the commandments about Muslim practices such as prayer or giving to charity or the fact that under *Shari'ah* law Islam gave women inheritance rights that were far ahead of their Western counterparts. Women in Britain did not receive such rights until the Married Women's Property Act of 1870. Instead, the image presented is of a law that is believed to oppress and that is seen as backward.

The Sun and *Daily Express* took a very different stance. Both papers were openly hostile. *The Sun's* headline on the 8 February claimed, "Williams: Victory for terrorism"[310] and started a campaign for Williams' resignation. The next day it furthered its campaign, running the story, "Arch enemy: Bash the Bishop"[311] which asked people to join their campaign. The article on the 8th February played on the image of the Islamic threat to the British way of life, an image that, as already has been discussed, is an all too prevalent theme. To reinforce its stance the newspaper included an image of the London bus destroyed during the 7/7 bombings and comments from 7/7 survivors. This could stir up fears and hostilities by reminding readers of the 'threat within'. It is not possible to tell whether those who were commenting on what William's had said had read his lecture notes but their negatives responses are used to attack Williams. The newspaper also included an image of a man being flogged next to information about what *Shari'ah* involves. Although the article

stated that *Shari'ah* covers all aspects of a Muslim's life the clear focus was on those aspects that are barbaric and the inclusion of the image directs reader's attention to this.

The *Daily Express* also used images to provoke a particular response. Although towards the end of "Muslim laws must come to Britain"[312] it was made clear that Williams had spoken out against inhumane punishments used in some Islamic states, the image used earlier within the article was of a man receiving eighty lashes in Iran for drinking alcohol and having sex outside of marriage. The focus therefore was clearly on the barbaric and extreme.

Williams later acknowledged that the language he had used could have been unclear[313]. However, journalists have a duty to explain complex issues to non-specialists and therefore they should have ensured they had all the facts before writing such articles, again a brief Internet search would have provided journalists with information regarding Shari'ah[314,315,316]. Their failure to do so raises questions about the reasons behind their actions. Even when the facts came to light the story continued on the front-pages. George argues that this is clear evidence of the 'rat-pack mentality' at work[317]. Investigative journalist Nick Davies refers to this type of reporting as "Ninja Turtle Syndrome"[318], when media outlets run stories that are being widely circulated elsewhere, even if those stories lack merit.

The notion of the Islamification of Britain also appeared in articles from the end of March to the end of May 2008. *The Telegraph* ran an article about

Muslims supposedly outnumbering churchgoers[319]. It claimed that projected figures from the group Christian Research suggested that Muslims worshipping at mosques would soon outnumber Roman Catholics. It reminded readers of the Williams *Shari'ah* furore; such a reminder serves to reinforce the idea that Muslims pose a threat to traditional British values. Other press outlets then picked up the story. The *Daily Star* echoed the sentiments the following day, stating, "Islam set to be top UK religion"[320]. The *Daily Express* ran an article called "Stop building mosques in UK"[321] which reported comments made by Alison Ruoff, an Evangelical member of the Church of England's General Synod, that more mosques would lead to *Shari'ah* law becoming a reality.

These articles present the idea of Muslims practicing their faith as something that is a cause of concern and a threat to British identity. They also make it appear as if Islam and Christianity are in competition. During Moore *et al*'s research of this story[322] it became evident that the Christian Research publication[323] had at no point given direct comparison figures on Muslim and Christian numbers and the figures presented were purely speculative and from survey research. Furthermore, the publication had used a secondary source called *The Islamification of Britain: And What Can Be Done To Prevent It*[324]. The title itself suggests that any information within the publication is unlikely to be objective. If newspapers are going to report such claims it is important that they take the time to ensure that they understand where such stories are coming from and consider possible motives.

A further example of newspapers failure to check all the facts can be found in *The Sun's* "Get off my bus, I need to pray"[325]. The article claimed that driver, Arunas Raulynaitis, had ordered passengers off his bus so he could pray. With the sentence, "passengers watched in amazement as he held out his palms towards the sky, bowed his head and began to chant", the paper painted the image of a Muslim practicing his faith as something that was 'alien'. It printed pictures of Raulynaitis praying and video footage was posted on their website. The images and video were quickly circulated via the Internet. This occurred before the London United Bus Company had investigated the incident; once investigated the truth was very different. It emerged that the bus had been delayed and in order to maintain frequency of service Raulynaitis had been told to stop his bus and ask passengers to board the bus behind. He was then told to take a ten-minute break and could therefore do what he wished. Furthermore, the member of the public who had filmed him praying and sold the images to *The Sun* had not been on the bus; he arrived later and jumped to the wrong conclusion. *The Sun* did print an apology on 15th August 2008[326] and removed the story from its website, although elements of the article can be found on various websites, including Islamophobia Watch[327] and Ummah Pulse[328]. Regardless of the apology the damage had already been done, and the article is a good example of how, in the digital age, stories whether they are fact or fiction, can quickly spread. Raulynaitis was awarded thirty thousand pounds in compensation.

From an analysis of these reports it would appear that there is evidence of a constant drip-feeding by some newspapers, especially the tabloids, of

negative stories, which appears to shape the dominant narrative about Islam and Muslims. Although it is possible to find good examples of reporting and stories that attempt to show Muslims in a positive light the continued negative images are powerful and could lead to, as the Director of the Christian Muslim Forum claimed, "even the most engaged, integrated and inter-faith Muslims becoming weary, frustrated and irritated"[329].

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

The objective of this dissertation has been to assess the British Press' role in shaping attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. To enable this assessment selected articles from the past twenty years were examined to establish whether the press presents Islam and Muslims accurately or whether the image being presented is distorted and misleading. In reaching a conclusion, analysis has also taken into consideration the challenges that journalists face and the influence of external factors.

Through the analysis presented in Chapter 4 it is evident that there has been a disproportionate amount of media coverage given to Islam. This echoes the conclusions of many previous studies [330, 331, 332]. There is evidence of a dependence, amongst many newspapers, on historical archetypes and contemporary stereotypes. The analysis demonstrates that this is not just an issue within the tabloids, *The Telegraph* especially often demonstrates a tendency to present closed views of Islam.

A series of negative ideas have been repeated over and over and in doing so they do play a part in shaping public opinion. Muslims become indistinguishable from their stereotypical constructs. It is apparent, at least amongst some sections of the press, that common themes have developed. There is a tendency to present stories about Islam and Muslims in a way to highlight notions of 'us' and 'them' and the idea that there is no common ground between Islam and the West. Islam is often seen as 'barbaric',

'oppressive' and a 'threat to the British way of life'. Images that Said first acknowledged and have changed little in the preceding decades. The EUMC report claimed that these "images and stereotypes are so deeply imbedded and almost necessary to media that Islamophobia is almost a natural process"[333]. Given the importance of Islam in the world today it is essential that Islam be approached with more than these stereotypes.

It would be wrong however to attack the press as if it were one homogenous group. The analysis has demonstrated that there are a number of good examples of balanced reporting that presents both Muslims and the religion in a positive light, especially within the broadsheets. Nevertheless the analysis of articles has demonstrated that there is enough evidence of lazy, stereotypical and factually inaccurate reporting to cause concern.

The tone used in many reports, especially those contained within the tabloids, is alarmist, emotive and at times even abusive. Muslims appear to be presented in terms of their Muslimness and do not appear as 'normal' members of society, a point previously highlighted by Archer[334] and Poole[335]. Sections of the press appear to only be concerned about Islam for the 'big debates' about extremism, violence and terrorism. It is also apparent from the analysis of reports that these also serve as an attack on immigration, asylum seekers, the welfare state and political correctness. Sweeping generalisations are regularly made and there is a failure to see Islam as anything other than monolithic. If differences are ignored then it can lead to Muslims feeling as if they are all under attack. However, the image that is all too often presented in

the press is all the easier to sustain when fundamentalists and extremists are happy to play up to it and provide sensational sound bytes. There has been too much focus on divergence rather than convergence and this makes it difficult for mainstream voices to be heard.

It is understandable that, in the light of 9/11 and 7/7, newspapers will publish stories on Islam and Muslims as these events have meant that the religion and its followers have been put under the microscope. However, this does not justify them publishing lies, as has been evidenced in some articles, where it has been demonstrated that facts have been distorted, exaggerated, oversimplified and even invented. Perhaps, as Baker *et al* suggest, if it had not been for 9/11 and 7/7 the situation might be different[336]. Newspapers deal with what is new and dramatic and tend to focus on the negative. Journalists look for impact, something that will provoke an emotional response. News has, as Peppiatt suggests, moved from being a product of information to a product of entertainment[337]. Journalists are under pressure from editors to cover certain issues and Islam is one of the current 'hot topics'. There is a pressure to get a story out quickly and this leaves little time for proper research. It is then when the lines of accuracy and inaccuracy become blurred, but a line does need to be drawn when it comes to stories that are clearly false.

However, the analysis of reporting and crime figures has demonstrated that it is not possible to provide concrete evidence that any of the articles contained within this study were directly responsible for any acts of aggression towards

Muslims. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the impact of such stories should be dismissed. It is incorrect to assume that newspapers are simply passive reflectors of society. Media discourse does influence public opinion and the press can aggravate or moderate perceptions of fear. The 'closed views' often presented can give support to racism whether that was the intention or not. Newspapers have an extensive reach in the digital age. The Internet has countless forums that use newspaper articles to help present a particular view of Islam. As Nick Griffin leader of the British National Party claims:

"We bang on about Islam. Why? Because to the ordinary public out there it is the thing they understand. It's the thing the newspaper editors sell newspapers with."[338]

By presenting Islam and Muslims in a series of snapshots, that are all too often negative, newspapers can contribute to the 'moral panic'. This is not to say that the newspapers should not highlight issues of unfair treatment, forced marriages and terrorism. The answer does not lie in giving Muslims special treatment or overlooking the problems in some Muslim societies, but these topics should be explained in context and cultural roots acknowledged so to demonstrate the diversity that exists. The failure of the press to tell the 'whole story' means that the full picture is distorted. This does not help to further the reader's knowledge and understanding but instead, as Esposito claims, "reinforces the problem rather than opening the way to new solutions"[339].

Whilst it might be unrealistic to believe that completely objective reporting is possible it is not unrealistic to ask the press to be fair, balanced, neutral and detached. Although freedom of expression is an important right, it is, as Petley states, not an absolute[340]. There is a very important distinction that needs to be made between having the right and choosing to exercise that right responsibly. It is a recommendation of this dissertation that the press needs to look further into how it can balance freedom of speech whilst at the same time covering events without prejudice. Editors also need to take more responsibility for the views expressed by columnists. The analysis contained within the previous chapter demonstrated that columnists are more prone to present negative views of Islam and are often more offensive. In the past the PCC has dismissed complaints about columnists' articles because they are opinion pieces. However, as this dissertation has demonstrated, their views are often ill informed and serve no purpose other than to attack Islam. The impact that these views can have on public opinion does need to be considered further. Furthermore, in the digital age, newspaper online pages often have sections allowing the public to comment on such articles. Much of what is written is goaded by the article itself and there is a lack of moderation regarding what is posted. This raises further concern; editors need to take more responsibility regarding the content of online pages.

A further recommendation of this dissertation relates to the need to re-evaluate the role of the PCC. This is not a new suggestion, the Runnymede report reached the same conclusion[341] and the MRG also highlighted issues with Article 13[342] as the PCC cannot take up third party complains, meaning

that reports which contain prejudiced statements that could be harmful cannot be objected to if they do not refer to a specific person. This is a gap that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, many of the committee members on the board of the PCC own the very newspapers that are often being complained about. This is a conflict of interest, which means that, as Petley argues, the PCC becomes "hopeless as a bulwark against negative representations"[343]. The *Daily Express* and *Daily Star* have also been withdrawn from being adjudicated by the PCC. The analysis within this dissertation has indicated that these newspapers are amongst the worst offenders for representing Islam in a negative light and for producing fabricated stories. The PCC becomes part of the problem rather than the solution, leading to questions about whether there needs to be a new regulator that all newspapers ascribe to. This is something that has been raised by the Leveson Inquiry[344]. At the very least it should be recommended that serving editors should not sit on the PCC.

Journalists should also have a greater awareness of the subject matter on which they are reporting. Whilst it is true that the PCC and NUJ do contain some guidance, more explicit guidance is needed. The Society of Editors publication is a positive step in the right direction as it contains sections on the basics of each faith and guidance on reporting about Islam and Muslims. It warns journalists not to confuse culture and faith[345] and also provides links to Muslim organisations that can provide further information. This is useful for journalists who are facing the restraints of time and need to access accurate and verified information quickly. However, it is a recommendation of this

dissertation that more needs to be done to educate journalists. Voluntary codes and guidelines are not enough to ensure that journalists are better informed. Education is the key, a point noted by many previous reports[346,347,348]. It is here where Muslims can play a role in running seminars on Islam and educating journalists about Islamophobia. The Internet can also be a valuable tool in providing Muslims with an opportunity to reach out to people who know little about Islam. As Bunt argues, new media outlets mean that Islam is integrated into our daily life[349]. Social media could provide Muslims with a greater opportunity to engage with non-Muslims. However, people do need to be cautious when it comes to content on the Internet. The misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims can be further exacerbated by extremist groups who use the Internet as a vehicle to put forward their own message. Nevertheless, new media can play a valuable role in helping to debunk newspaper misrepresentations. As newspaper sales decline and the popularity of new media forms increases, this presents the opportunity for future study into how new media outlets represent Islam and Muslims.

This dissertation has demonstrated that there is no quick fix to the issue of how the press presents Muslims and Islam. Many of the issues that have been highlighted have been raised before and have continued to be raised in the studies and reports that have been released since the publication of the Runnymede report. The fact that there is still evidence of the press presenting Islam in a negative light suggests that this is an area that requires sustained work to help break through the historical stereotypes that are still presented. Although any ideology of Islamophobia is, as Allen argues, not the sole

construct of the media[350] and it needs to be acknowledged that there are many religious, political and psychological factors at play, there is enough evidence to suggest that the press does need to put its house in order.

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Appendix 1

Metropolitan Police Figures on Islamophobic Crimes, 2011 - 2013

Racist & religious crime			Islamophobic crime		
	12 months to	*12 months to*		*12 months to*	*12 months to*
	Aug 2013	*Aug 2012*	*Change*	*Aug 2013*	*Aug 2012*	*Change*
Tower Hamlets	420	351	**+19.7%**	41	19	**+115.8%**
Newham	280	258	**+8.5%**	27	6	**+350.0%**
Greenwich	328	326	**+0.6%**	22	5	**+340.0%**
Lewisham	286	285	**+0.4%**	17	14	**+21.4%**
Hackney	338	304	**+11.2%**	12	9	**+33.3%**
Islington	406	474	**-14.3%**	29	20	**+45.0%**
Westminster	560	654	**-14.4%**	33	25	**+32.0%**
Waltham Forest	293	303	**-3.3%**	31	11	**+181.8%**
Southwark	348	381	**-8.7%**	19	8	**+137.5%**
Camden	445	484	**-8.1%**	17	23	**-26.1%**
Lambeth	341	412	**-17.2%**	26	9	**+188.9%**
London total	9035	9240	**-2.2%**	550	286	**+92.3%**

Appendix 2.1

National Hate Crime Figures, 2011 – 2012

Numbers							England and Wales, recorded crime
Police force area	Monitored hate crime strand						Total
	Race	Religion	Sexual orientation	Disability	Transgender		
Cleveland	307	1	25	15	0		348
Durham	227	23	31	13	4		298
Northumbria	557	13	33	22	1		626
Cheshire	289	1	58	7	4		359
Cumbria	194	17	45	17	9		282
Greater Manchester	2,974	180	303	73	17		3,547
Lancashire	766	60	92	40	13		971
Merseyside	1,107	30	138	134	6		1,415
Humberside	415	6	56	14	3		494
North Yorkshire	141	2	20	9	2		174
South Yorkshire	443	6	35	9	3		496
West Yorkshire	1,840	45	36	137	3		2,061
Derbyshire	440	1	54	12	0		507
Leicestershire	880	77	103	97	5		1,162
Lincolnshire	205	19	23	5	12		264

Northamptonshire	456	6	49	50	3		564
Nottinghamshire	542	18	78	42	0		680
Staffordshire	645	7	62	53	6		773
Warwickshire	262	5	19	8	1		295
West Mercia	568	7	58	36	3		672
West Midlands	2,531	52	210	46	10		2,849
Bedfordshire	269	11	18	9	1		308
Cambridgeshire	338	10	26	6	1		381
Essex	739	16	85	36	23		899
Hertfordshire	632	21	43	15	7		718
Norfolk	347	18	62	120	4		551
Suffolk	351	30	73	130	17		601
London, City of	56	3	5	2	1		67
Metropolitan Police	7,983	607	1,234	120	74		10,018
Hampshire	946	19	198	40	0		1,203
Kent	747	15	59	34	10		865
Surrey	544	21	28	40	0		633
Sussex	520	23	111	23	4		681
Thames Valley	1,237	78	112	32	20		1,479
Avon and Somerset	1,241	48	150	113	16		1,568
Devon and Cornwall	737	11	53	7	3		811
Dorset	226	1	26	9	2		264
Gloucestershire	212	13	28	5	3		261
Wiltshire	185	5	33	17	2		242

Dyfed-Powys	80	4	22	8	0		114
Gwent	183	7	41	7	3		241
North Wales	359	5	62	31	8		465
South Wales	746	38	119	76	10		989
British Transport Police	1,349	41	136	25	1		1,552
England and Wales	**35,816**	**1,621**	**4,252**	**1,744**	**315**		**43,748**

Data available at Hate crimes, England and Wales 2011/12 – Gov.UK

National Hate Crime Figures, 2002 – 2013
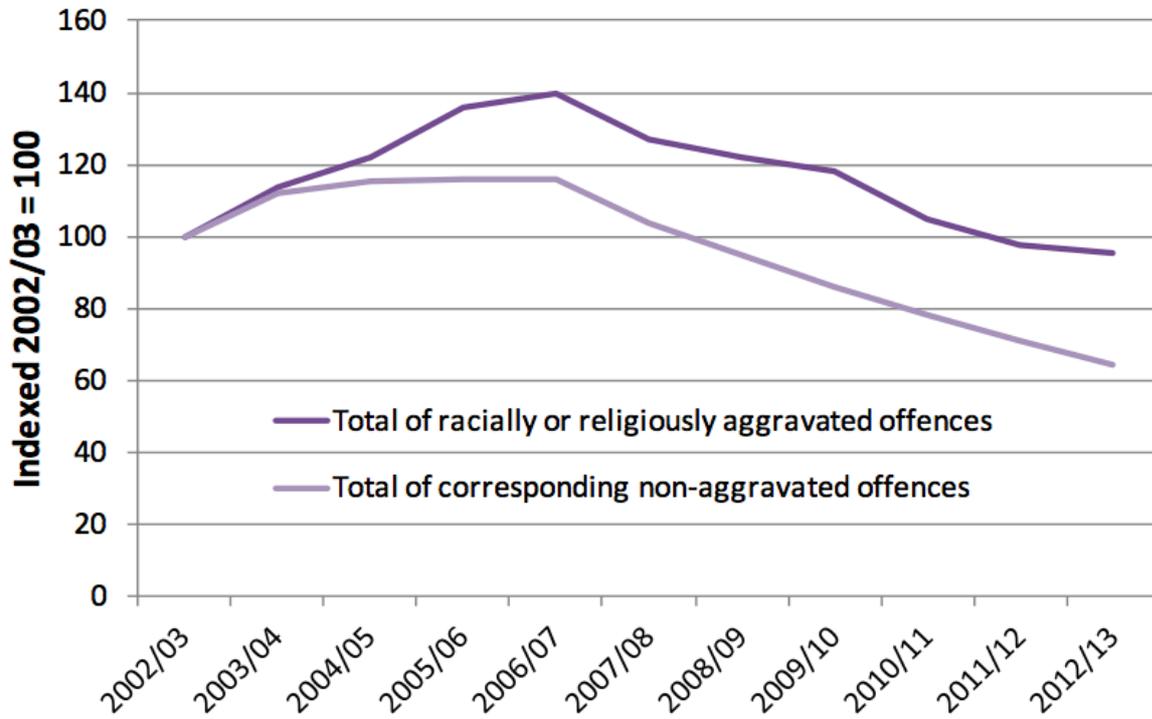
Political Alignment of British National Newspapers

Broadsheet and former broadsheet newspapers

Title	Published	Format	Est.	Owner	Orientation	Political Party Support in 2010 General Election
The Daily Telegraph	Daily	Broadsheet	1855	Press Holdings	Centre-right, conservative	Conservative Party
The Sunday Telegraph	Sundays	Broadsheet	1961	Press Holdings	Centre-right, conservative	
Financial Times	Daily	Broadsheet	1888	Pearson PLC	Economically liberal, politically centrist	Conservative Party
The Sunday Times	Sunday	Broadsheet	1822	News Corporation	Centre-right	Conservative Party
The Guardian	Daily	Berliner since 12 September 2005	1821	Scott Trust Limited	Centre-left and social-liberal	Liberal Democrats
The Observer	Sunday	Berliner since 8 January 2006	1791	Scott Trust Limited	Centre-left, social-liberal	
The Independent	Daily	Compact since May 2004	1986	Alexander Lebedev's Independent Print Limited	Centre-left	Liberal Democrats
The Times	Daily	Compact since November 2004	1785	News Corporation	Centre-right	Conservative Party
Independent on Sunday	Sunday	Compact since October 2005	1990	Alexander Lebedev's Independent Print Limited	Centre-left, liberal views	
i	Daily	Compact	2010	Alexander Lebedev's Independent Print Limited	Primarily aimed at younger readers and commuters.[1]	

"Middle-market" tabloid newspapers

Title	Published	Format	Est.	Owner	Orientation	Political Party Support in 2010 General Election
Daily Mail	Daily	Tabloid (Broadsheet until 1971)	1896	Lord Rothermere's Daily Mail and General Trust plc	Right-wing populist	Conservative Party
Daily Express	Daily	Compact (Broadsheet until 1977)	1900	Richard Desmond's Northern & Shell	Right-wing populist	Conservative Party
Sunday Express	Sunday	Compact (Broadsheet until 1992)	1918	Richard Desmond's Northern & Shell	Right-wing	
The Mail on Sunday	Sunday	Tabloid	1982	Lord Rothermere's Daily Mail and General Trust plc	Right-wing	Conservative Party

Tabloid newspapers

Title	Published	Format	Est.	Owner	Orientation	Political Party Support in 2010 General Election
The Sun	Daily	Tabloid	1964	News Corporation	Right-wing populist	Conservative Party
The Sun on Sunday	Sunday	Tabloid	2012	News Corporation		
Daily Mirror	Daily	Tabloid	1903	Trinity Mirror	Social-democratic, populist	Labour Party
Sunday Mirror	Sunday	Tabloid	1915	Trinity Mirror		Labour Party
Daily Star	Daily	Tabloid	1978	Richard Desmond's Northern & Shell	Right-wing populist	
Daily Star Sunday	Sunday	Tabloid	2002	Richard Desmond's Northern & Shell		
The Morning Star	Daily	Tabloid	1930	People's Press Printing Society, an independent readers' co-operative	Follows Britain's Road to Socialism (the programme of the Communist Party of Britain)	Labour Party
The People	Sunday	Tabloid	1881	Trinity Mirror		

Circulation figures for British National Newspapers

Title	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
The Sun	2,409,811	2,582,301	3,001,822	3,006,565	3,146,006
Daily Mail	1,863,151	1,945,496	2,136,568	2,120,347	2,200,398
Daily Mirror	1,058,488	1,102,810	1,194,097	1,218,425	1,366,891
Evening Standard	695,645	699,368	704,008	601,960	237,403
Daily Telegraph	555,817	578,774	651,184	691,128	783,210
Daily Star	535,957	617,082	734,311	779,376	768,534
Daily Express	529,648	577,543	639,875	674,640	736,340
The Times	399,339	397,549	457,250	508,250	617,483
i	293,946	264,432	133,472	*N/A*	*N/A*
Financial Times	275,375	316,493	383,067	390,315	426,676
Daily Record	251,535	291,825	306,872	323,831	354,302
The Guardian	204,440	215,988	279,308	302,285	358,844
The Independent	76,802	105,160	185,035	185,815	215,504

Title	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
The Sun	3,209,766	3,217,844	3,319,337	3,382,509	3,410,701
Daily Mail	2,313,908	2,354,028	2,389,011	2,409,121	2,485,210
Daily Mirror	1,512,599	1,621,000	1,727,672	1,748,327	1,919,125
Evening Standard	294,823	276,562	337,080	350,671	395,090
Daily Telegraph	890,086	911,454	917,943	920,745	914,981
Daily Star	722,969	773,637	820,070	861,825	901,879
Daily Express	752,699	771,325	849,001	949,238	956,649
The Times	633,718	670,054	685,081	686,327	660,713
i	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
Financial Times	452,448	439,104	441,840	422,519	422,543
Daily Record	393,788	418,628	451,932	471,708	503,077
The Guardian	378,394	384,070	394,913	376,816	383,157
The Independent	250,641	263,503	258,387	257,100	248,876

Title	2003	2002	2001	2000	
The Sun	3,578,506	3,502,923	3,636,561	3,557,336	
Daily Mail	2,518,544	2,489,264	2,479,768	2,353,915	
Daily Mirror	2,071,059	2,164,576	2,149,422	2,270,543	
Evening Standard	424,177	410,104	432,661	440,287	
Daily Telegraph	946,697	1,013,653	1,022,263	1,039,749	
Daily Star	835,343	706,554	543,807	502,647	
Daily Express	983,391	991,560	979,042	1,050,846	
The Times	671,340	711,295	734,220	726,349	
i	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	
Financial Times	431,875	475,475	478,161	435,478	
Daily Record	520,540	584,290	603,914	626,646	
The Guardian	409,568	411,386	410,152	401,560	
The Independent	221,926	224,655	223,645	222,106	

Figures shown are average circulations for January of each year. Only newspapers with circulations of more that 100,000 copies per day in January 2009 are listed. All figures originate from the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

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