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Attitudes Towards and Experiences of Muslim Women Wearing Differing Levels of Head and, or Face Veil

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Supervised by Bernard Gallagher

Submitted to School of Human and Health Sciences
1st October 2018

This research examines Muslim and non-Muslim women's attitudes towards different levels of adorning the veil. Exploring how the veil is represented in the media and the impact of this on anti-Muslim hate incidents.

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Abstract

This paper examined Muslim and non-Muslim women's attitudes towards different levels of veiling in the United Kingdom (UK) and in particular, the extent to which discrimination and prejudice against Muslim women increased if she wore the head/face veil or any type of clothing associated with Islam. Although there were a small number of studies that indicated a link between Muslim women wearing the veil and victimisation - based on the visibility of their Muslim identity (Everette et al, 2014; Chakraborti & Zempi 2015; Rhodes, 2016; Zempi, 2014) - there was not a great deal of research on this topic, with most of the literature largely based around the head veil rather than the face veil. Therefore this study aimed to address some of this gap, by providing existing views and feelings about the head and face veil. Specific emphasis was given to exploring the factors that motivated Muslim women to adorn either the head veil or both head and face veil.

The study explores the decision to wear a head veil and/or face veil which is viewed as a Muslim woman fulfilling their religious duties, with some women choosing to make the transition from head veil to face veil when striving for a higher level of religiousness. The head veil is also seen as an embodiment of modesty, virtue and respect. For some of the younger participants, experimenting with different styles of head veil provides a means to engage with the latest fashion trends. Differences, as well as similarities, arise between wearers and non-wearers of the face veil. While the former regard the face veil as a religious requirement, the latter consider it an unnecessary and impractical piece. The findings and analysis reveal most of the women feel the head veil is compatible with British values, however, perceived media bias is associated with a tendency to portray negative and stereotypical images of Muslim women who veil.

Furthermore, Islamophobic incidents seem to increase following 'terrorist' attacks carried out by individuals who identify as Muslims. Participants feel Islamophobia is a manifestation of racism and xenophobia. The view that there is an inherent dislike of 'brown and black people' only exacerbates the level of discrimination against veiled Muslim women.

Chapter 1- Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore attitudes towards, and experiences of, Muslim and non-Muslim women to the wearing of head and face veils in the UK, where the veil has become a prominent issue in public discourse. There is a growing body of research that has found that Muslims are perceived as a threat to Western society (Cessari, 2013; Halliday, 1999; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Research also suggests that discrimination and prejudice against Muslims have increased. Six out of every ten Muslims in Britain surveyed by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC, 2015) said they had seen Islamophobia directed at someone. The equivalent figure was four in ten five years previous. According to the IHRC report, Muslims suffer physical and verbal abuse, as well as discrimination in the workplace. Feeling demonised and discriminated against, were also rising (IHRC 2015).

The Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES, 2010) found non-white Muslim women were more likely to suffer discrimination on the street than their non-white non-Muslim counterparts. This may be because women wearing head/ face veils are easily identified as Muslims. The likelihood of being attacked is increased if Muslim women wear the head/face veil or any type of clothing associated with Islam (Allen, 2013; Hargreaves, 2016). The annual survey by the anti-Muslim hate-monitoring group Tell MAMA (2016) found a 326% rise in hate incidents last year, resulting in British Muslims being afraid to conduct their daily lives.

Although there are a small number of studies that indicate a link between Muslim women wearing the veil and victimization - based on the visibility of their Muslim identity (Everette et al 2014; Chakraborti & Zempi 2015; Rhodes, 2016; Zempi, 2014) - there is not a great deal of research on this topic. This study aimed to address some of this gap. The data collected from both Muslim and non-Muslim women for the present study will provide existing views and feelings about the head and face veil. Currently, there is little if any research undertaken on the full-face veil, with most of the literature largely based around the head veil.

The practise of veiling has many complex symbolic meanings, from oppression and modesty to piety and self-expression (Everett et al. 2015). The present research sought to examine the levels of discrimination Muslim women who adorn the veil face experience and to shed some light on why anti-Muslim hate crime is disproportionately high against veiled Muslim women (Kabir, 2016; TellMAMA, 2017). In an attempt to

explore both perspectives of the 'veil debate', the present research also explores how the head veil and the face veil are perceived by non-Muslim women and the impact of these perceptions on attitude towards women who veil.

To provide some context to the topic of Muslim women and veiling, the following chapter will discuss the relevant literature on Muslims in Britain, beginning with community cohesion and integration, Islam and Muslims, and migration and settling in Britain. This literature review will then focus on historical discrimination against minority groups, such as Jews, Blacks and Asians. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature on discrimination faced by Muslim women, both historic and current. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology, outlining the research paradigm, philosophical stance and theoretical perspective that informed the research. Concluding chapter 3 will be an outlining of the research methods that were used for this qualitative study, as well as how the data was analysed. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the study and in Chapter 5 I assess the results of the present research in the context of the wider literature, and I finish by discussing the limitations of this study. In the final chapter, I set out the implications of the present study in terms of policy, practice and future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Community cohesion and integration

The Muslim Council of Britain (Ali, 2015) examined the characteristics of British Muslim life, using information drawn from qualitative studies including the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2011). The data also revealed an increase in Muslims living in Britain from 1.6 million in 2001 (ONS, 2011) to 2.71 million in 2011. With this growth in the number of Muslims living in Britain expected to continue, it is clear Muslims are becoming an increasingly part of the social fabric of British society today. However, for British Muslims to be able to identify with their multifaceted identities, they must address the complex notion of what it means to be 'British' as well as 'Muslim'. 'Identity' can be defined as a set of meanings that describes who one is when they occupy a particular role in society or a group (Burke & Stets, 2009). This involves knowing who we are and knowing who others are, a type of 'mapping of the human world' (Jenkins, 2014). Identity is both individual and group-orientated and comprises a complex set of variables, such as colour, culture, religion and religious expression, language and the community in which the individual or group lives. This sense of community, in turn, impacts a person's experience, values and sense of belonging. Furthermore, these specific characteristics can affect their integration into mainstream society (Kabir, 2012; McGown, 1999).

While many young UK born Muslims view themselves as culturally and socially 'English', 'Scottish', 'Welsh' or 'Northern Irish', some of them feel an absence in emotional or cultural bonds with the majority population (Ansari, 2004). However and despite this weakness in 'patriotism', there remains a reluctance to affiliate with their parent's homeland, which is perceived to be 'alien' (Gardner & Shakur, cited in Ballard, 1994). The present study aimed to examine perceived attitudes towards and experiences of Muslim women wearing the head and/or face veil. The data can help explore whether women who adorn the veil feel they are at more risk of facing discrimination. In an environment where Muslims view themselves as a victimised minority, Taylor and Rogers (1993) argue that the idea of identity is partly shaped by recognition, and if demeaned or confined in any way, can result in harm.

As Gill (2011) describes the most important aspect of the identity rhetoric as the dominance of a Muslim 'Ummah' which represents a 'Muslim brotherhood or community.'

Furthermore, Berggren (2004) states, Muslims identify themselves in religious terms and are more likely to claim a transnational, religious identity. Asther (2014) highlights how the global dimension to Islamic identity construction is evident after the publication of the controversial book 'The Satanic Verses.' Published in England, the book focussed not only on the religious beliefs and practices of Islam but also addressed highly sensitive issues such as the wives of the prophet (Pipes, 2017). Protests erupted amongst Muslim communities across the world, with the books being declared 'blasphemous' and banned in India and Pakistan (Mazrui, 1990). In Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a death sentence to Rushdie, while others offered a large cash reward for anyone who would kill the author (Mazrui, 1990).

While identity is about a shared belonging, it also allows us to understand the sense of the difference between individuals and groups that form the rhetoric of the 'other' based on national, ethnic and religious belonging. Tajfel (1974) explored individuals' affiliations with the groups to which they belong (social identity), the psychological effects of differences in power and the subsequent impact on their attitude towards their social groups and others. Issues such as the UK's foreign policy, social exclusion and Islamophobia can all impact upon Muslim social identity, and thus cause tension and conflict for community cohesion (Kabir, 2012).

Islam and Muslims

Islam originated in the 6th Century Saudi Arabia, situated in southwest Asia, the largest country of Arabia, bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The cities of Makkah and Medinah are known as the two sanctuaries of Islam (Greaves, 2005; Peters, 1994). Islam belongs to the Abrahamic branch of religions formed based on their commonality in being monotheistic doctrines whose prophetic founders, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, connect back to Abraham (Hughes, 2012). Monotheistic religions restrict worship to one God (Yahya, 2001).

Followers of Islam are called Muslims (Yahya, 2001) and belief in Allah [God] is the cornerstone of the entire faith of Islam, with the premise being that Allah is the sole creator and sustainer of all creation (Zorbazo, 2000; Yahya, 2001). Muslims believe Mohammed was the final prophet of Islam, and to whom the holy book, the Quran, was revealed. The prophet then taught his companions based upon his revelations (Ramadan, 2007). The moral teachings of the Quran instruct Muslims to show mercy,

compassion and tolerance in every aspect of their life, so that peace may be experienced in the world (Greaves, 2010; Yahya 2001). Furthermore, Islam recognises humankind has a choice of obeying or disobeying Allah, and that there is no compulsion in the religion's teachings (Al-Quran verse 2:256).

Migration and settlement

While Islam is seen as a 'peace-loving' religion by Muslims, Arkoun (2003) suggests many in the West feel the religion is militant and inferior to Judaism and Christianity. There is a growing tendency for Islam to be pictured in an unflattering manner. For Muslims, this could lead to them feeling they are under siege (Fish, 2011). To better understand this reality, consideration needs to be given to the migration of Muslims to the UK.

The encounter between Islam and the West is not a recent phenomenon. Muslims reached southern Europe as early as the seventh century (Mansouri, 2012). More recent immigration in the twentieth century involved large populations leaving their various countries for economic, cultural or social reasons. The presence of Muslims in Britain has a long, dynamic and productive history. After Russia (10.9%), France (6%) and Germany (5.2%), Britain is home to the largest proportion of Europe's Muslims (4%) (Kettani, 2010), second to Christians in terms of religious observance (Ansari 2004).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Muslims arriving into Manchester, mainly from the East Punjab region of India, laid the foundations for a thriving Asian fabric and garment trade (Werbner, 1990). Familiarity with business in the UK allowed these early migrants to begin their entrepreneurial journeys and establish future Muslim communities in other major industrial cities such as Birmingham, Newcastle and Oxford (Ansari, 2004; Nasta, 2013). Muslims from 'middle-class' India also arrived in Glasgow, dispersing to other cities, such as Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh (Maan, 1992; Ansari, 2004). Many migrants used port cities such as Liverpool, Hull, Middlesbrough and Cardiff to move inland towards cities, such as Bradford and Birmingham (Dahya, 1974 (cited in Cohen, 2014); Visram, 1986). Of the three major South Asian communities in the UK, (Indian, Pakistani & Bangladeshi), the Pakistani community are the most dispersed, with large communities in Lancashire, Yorkshire, West Midlands and Greater London (ONS, 2005; Kabir 2012). Although Muslims in Britain are usually associated with the South Asian

community, by the end of the nineteenth century, Somalis, Moroccan and Yemeni migrants also settled in Britain (Ansari, 2004).

Commonwealth immigration from 1950s onwards was initially in the form of male labour to meet the demands for cheap, unskilled industrial workers, who were themselves ultimately in search of a better standard of living (Modood, 2006). Many arrived from South Asia to increase their earnings and benefit from improved healthcare and education. This also provided the opportunity to send remittance payments to family members in their country of origin (Dahya, 1974). By the 1960s, many of these immigrants were joined by their wives and children. However, the settlement of immigrants posed, and in some respects still faces many challenges. Immigration has attracted varying levels of hostility and racial prejudice focussed around issues such as employment and ethnic and religious expression (Holmes, 1988). As Keohane & Hoffman (1991) point out, a 'new life' for immigrants often involved 'transition, pain and upheaval'.

The onset of the Second World War meant that the demand for war materials increased and many migrants were instructed to work in factories manufacturing essential wartime products, in cities such as Bradford, Leeds, Birmingham and Coventry (Matar, 1998; Halliday, 1992; Dahya, 1965). Thus, the millions of new arrivals who made their way to the UK in the 20th and 21st century transformed it into a thriving multi-cultural state. Unfortunately for the immigrants, arriving in Britain created feelings of resentment from both the state and existing population (Panayi, 1999). Differing manifestations of xenophobia (an irrational fear or distrust of foreigners; Bordeau, 2010) ranged from refusing to speak to immigrants to killing them (Panayi, 1999).

Muslim discrimination

Post-war discrimination against Muslims was similar to that faced by most immigrants, with areas such as housing, education and employment all affected (Ansari, 1988). Now that many British Muslims have reached third and fourth generations, issues around cultural assimilation and integration shift towards religious identity and discrimination (Abbas, 2005). The concept of 'colour' racism was, in the past, the predominant discourse on equality. However, the focus now is religion (Birt, 2005). So while discrimination based on perceived physical differences does continue, cultural and socio-religious racism is more prevalent (Allen & Nielson 2002). By the twenty-first century,

anti-Muslim rhetoric was reinforced considerably by the reactions to the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in the United States on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the subsequent 'war on terrorism' (Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero, 2006). If 9/11 was the pretext for Muslims achieving notoriety as a 'political problem' (Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero, 2006), the London tube bombings on July 2005, which killed over fifty people and injured hundreds of others (Hoffman, 2016), increased anxieties about 'extremist' Muslims in Britain (Gale, 2007). Asian communities and in particular the Muslim community became the focus of a new xenophobic discourse (Nasta, 2013).

Despite Muslims being increasingly targeted with this new form of prejudice, they remain unprotected by current legislation (Elahi & Khan, 2017). While Jews who wear the 'yarmulke' (skull cap) and Sikhs who wear the turban are vulnerable to discrimination, they are protected by racial discrimination legislation (Equality Act, 2010). However, it was still lawful to discriminate against Muslims because legal and policy frameworks did not view Muslims as an ethnic group (Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero, 2006). According to Allen (2005), this attitude of rejecting Muslim discrimination, in many ways legitimised Islamophobia and could be viewed as a form of cultural racism, that involved attacking religious symbols of Islam and silencing the voices of Muslims (Werbner, 1997).

Reinforcing this view, a Home Office study entitled Religious Discrimination in England and Wales (Weller, Feldman, Purdam & Andrews 2001), found a consistently high level of unfair treatment reported, by Muslims, in education, employment, housing, and the criminal justice system. Many participants referred to the discriminatory treatment they received as 'racism'. Among the issues raised where Muslims felt excluded, were the 'availability of halal food', 'inadequate prayer facilities', and 'time off for prayer and religious festivals.' The study revealed, that in employment, Muslims faced discrimination not only concerning recruitment and selection, but also in the non-acceptance of their dress code, and ignorance and disrespect of religious customs. All these factors played a role in the unfair treatment of Muslims. However, and despite evidence to the contrary, the Government argued that new legislative measures were not required to prevent religious groups facing discrimination in employment or job opportunities (Modood, Triandafyllidou & Zapata-Barrero, 2006).

The Government response to a 2016 Report on Employment Opportunities for Muslims in the UK suggested that despite Government efforts to challenge disadvantage, 'it still lacked a coherent arching plan,' (Parliament UK, 2016).

It has been suggested that Muslims struggle to identify as 'British' because it conflicts with their religious identity. However, existing empirical data does not support this view (Jivraj & Simpson, 2015). The 2011 Census shows that over half of Muslims in Britain describe themselves as 'only British' (ONS, 2011). Muslim identity is often seen as obscuring or denying other identities, with Muslims being viewed as unwilling to forge alliances to integrate leading to notions of similarity and difference- 'us' and 'them' (Kabir, 2012). Many authors claim this 'othering' process towards Muslims results in the 'construction' and then 'reduction' of people to being less than what they are (Abbas, 2005; Holiday, 2004; Ameli and Merali, 2006).

According to a report by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2011), Section 44 of the Terrorism Act (s44) was the most common basis upon which Muslim men had contact with the police. Such measures were seen to exacerbate racial and religious profiling and discrimination (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). Currently, Muslims are facing the worst job discrimination of any minority group in Britain, as Khattab (2015), explains in his research. He found that Muslims had the lowest chance of being in work or a managerial position. Compared to White male Christians of the same age and similar educational background, Muslim men were up to 76% less likely to have a job of any kind. Khattab's research also suggested that Muslim women experienced similar disadvantages, with up to 65% less likely to be employed than their white Christian counterparts (Khattab 2015).

Islamophobia

The term 'Islamophobia' refers to a broad notion of anti-Muslim prejudice manifesting in hostility such as verbal and physical attacks, attacks on mosques, widespread negative stereotyping and discrimination in recruitment and employment (Muir 2004). Further described by Werbner & Modood (1997) as a form of cultural racism seeking to silence Muslim voices. It became more officially recognised after the Runnymede Trust (Conway, 1997) published a report entitled 'Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all' (Conway, 1997). The report found many people perceived Islam as threatening, and thus viewed Islamophobia as a natural and unproblematic response (Conway, 1997). This confirmed

a shift from race discrimination to religious prejudice in respect of people of South Asian heritage (Allen 2005, cited in Abbas 2005).

In 2017, two decades after Islamophobia first entered the policy discourse, following the 1997 report by the Commission on British Muslims -Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All - an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG, 2017) on British Muslims was established. One of its aims was to investigate prejudice, discrimination and hatred against Muslims in the UK. With Government statistics highlighting that racially and religiously motivated hate crime in England and Wales was on the rise for the fifth consecutive year (GOV.UK, 2018) the government was urged to adopt a formal definition of Islamophobia, similar to the definition of anti-Semitism created in 2016 (Goddard, 2018). The APPG (2018) put forward the first working definition of Islamophobia. In its report, *Islamophobia Defined*, it described Islamophobia as being rooted in racism and that it is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness. The APPG (2018) also considered whether the term Islamophobia should be replaced with anti-Muslim hatred. However, overwhelming evidence from across government, the community, academia, and public and private sector organisations suggested the term Islamophobia should be retained. Furthermore, Islamophobia was the term of choice amongst British Muslims to describe their experience (APPG, 2018).

Similarly, the Runnymede Trust's report, *Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All* (2017) argues that a definition of Islamophobia is not only the starting point for discussion but also a mechanism that would lead to accountability. According to the report the short definition of Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism, while the longer form builds upon the United Nations' definition of racism more generally, whereby, 'Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life' (Runnymede, 2017, p1). Arriving at a working definition serves not only to give meaning to the term Islamophobia but also give meaning to the nature of the problem. The definition, therefore, is not simply what Runnymede thinks is the most appropriate account of Islamophobia, but also points to various recommendations on how to address it (Elahi & Khan, 2017).

Nature and extent of Islamophobia

The report by the Runnymede Trust (2018) also suggests that defining Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism locates the issue as one in which a group of people are ascribed negative, cultural and racial attributes, which can lead to conscious or unconscious bias, prejudice, direct or indirect discrimination, structural inequality or hate incidents. However, despite the link between the visibly Muslim and Islamophobic incidents, the vulnerability of veiled Muslim women remains a largely ignored phenomenon (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Viewing Islamophobia and wearing the head and face veil through an intersectional lens allows the attention to be drawn to how various socially constructed categories meet to create intersecting systems of oppression (Turner, 2011), for example, gender and religion (Syed & Ozbiligin, 2015).

As a concept Crenshaw (1991) suggested intersectionality related to how two or more dimensions of a person's identity connect in a way that may result in multiple and intertwined layers of discrimination and disadvantage. Applying the concept to the veil, it is not only religious in nature but also gender-specific to women, Vakulenko (2007) concludes such connections between gender and Islamophobic victimisation is underestimated. Zempi and Mason-Bish (2018) in their qualitative study on Islamophobia, examined street harassment and found that in the current hostile environment, veiled Muslim women were more at risk of misogynistic and Islamophobic harassment. Zempi and Mason-Bish (2018) suggest that an intersectional analysis is crucial to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of these veiled Muslim women. The findings of their study demonstrated that for veiled Muslim women, such hostile environments limit their full participation in society.

Additionally, where gender intersects with other dimensions (in this case women and Islam), it is likely the women become even more vulnerable to misogynistic and Islamophobic violence (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Often this violence is constructed as a result of racialised exotic 'others' who fail to fit into the mould of an ideal Western woman (Perry, 2013). As Crenshaw (1994) made clear decades ago, women of colour are often simultaneously oppressed because of their gender, ethnic, racial and religious position. More recently, Allen (2015) interviewed Muslim women who wore both the head and face veil, and he concluded that Islamophobic incidents often occurred at the intersection of gender and religion. Similarly, highlighting the complexities of Muslim women's identities, Abu-Ras and Suarez (2009) observed how Islamic attire including head and face veils symbolised modesty and physical integrity, which as well as

identifying them as Muslims, also made them a target for hate crimes, discrimination and potential violations of the bodily integrity they wished to protect. Thus, for Muslim women, the Islamophobic violence they experience is different to that perpetrated against Muslim men (Perry, 2013). Recent evidence highlights that Muslim women are more vulnerable to Islamophobic violence. For example, in its annual survey TellMAMA (2016), an anti-Muslim hate-monitoring group, reported that the post-Brexit climate had increased the risk of visibly Muslim women being attacked. Between January and December 2017, TellMAMA recorded a 30% increase in street-level Islamophobic incidents from the previous year (TellMAMA, 2018). The report also highlighted that over 50% of the victims were visibly Muslim women.

A further examination of discrimination based on gender is crucial in my research to establish the extent of discriminatory attitudes against Muslim women. After decades of campaigning, the women's suffrage movement in Britain obtained the right to vote for women. The Equal Franchise Act (1928) extended access for women into politics that in the past were only reserved for men (Fish, 2011). However, and despite the growing feminist movement during 1890- 1960, labour shortages, world wars, and social changes in the perceived role of a woman, the employment market was a highly discriminatory place for women (Bourke, 1994). If they did find employment, 'marriage bars' prevented women from obtaining positions in certain occupations after they were married (Hanne, 2015). The overriding idea was that married women should be unpaid housewives (Pascall, 2012). This also reinforced the notion of the 'family model' consisting of a male breadwinner with a dependent wife (Oram, 1996). The Beveridge Report (1942) supported this view, which perceived men and women as different: men were seen as income providers and women as carers (Hills, Ditch & Glennerster, 2001).

There have been great changes to the lives, roles and duties of women at the start of the twenty-first century, with an increasingly active role in economic, political and public life, yet the two binary genders remain unequal (Scott, Crompton & Lyonette, 2011). A report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) found women were paid less than men in 90% of sectors, with males being paid on average 19% more than their female counterparts. The research also found that occupational segregation meant women were underrepresented in a range of sectors and occupations. In spite of women's achievements over the decades in areas such as education, discrimination stubbornly remains (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2015).

Muslim women and Discrimination

Dustin and Phillips (2008) suggest a shift in public discourse after the 1997 elections when New Labour came into power. The party doubled the number of women parliamentarians, including an increase in the number of Muslim women MP's (Rashid, 2016). However, Muslim women still faced multiple discriminations on the grounds of gender, ethnicity and faith (Rashid, 2016).

Of all South Asian women, Muslim women are perceived as being in particular need of empowerment by 'western superiors' (Rashid, 2016). This 'need' is due to the perceived status of women in Islam as well as the post-colonial construction of South Asian women, as being submissive (Rashid, 2016). Such problematic assumptions result in Muslim women viewed as 'backward' because they are seen as marginalised by Muslim men (Rashid, 2016). However, the Runnymede Trust (Alexander, Redcliff & Hussain, 2013), i to explore and challenge dominant discourses around Muslim identity in Britain, reinforced the very stereotypes they sought to challenge by observing Muslim women as victims of faith, second class citizens and subservient to their husbands.

With this underlying theme of the 'oppressed' Muslim woman embedded in the dominant discourse, clothing became an indicator of 'possible extremism' (Rashid, 2016). The veil (niqaab) is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, it is seen as oppressive, while on the other it signifies empowerment through religion (Dustin & Phillips, 2008). Feminists are also divided on this issue. Some view the practice of veiling as submission to men, whereas others conceptualise it as a symbol of resistance against Western authority, objectification of women by men and against Islamophobia (Bilge, 2010). For example, there have been numerous initiatives in the UK to ban both face veil and the burka (full body garment) (Ferrari & Pastorelli, 2004; Scott, 2007). Muslim women wearing a head covering or face veil have sparked more debate than any other garment of clothing (Rashid, 2016). Jack Straw triggered a nationwide debate on his weekly column in a local newspaper after a constituent wearing the face veil visited him. Straw argued that the conversation would have been of greater value if the woman had removed the veil (Rashid, 2016). Straw also explained how women appeared 'relieved' after being asked to remove the veil. Thus, the assumption Straw made was that Muslim women covered their faces at the behest of their fathers, brothers and husbands, a further symbol of patriarchy (Rashid, 2016).

Manifestations of discrimination against Muslim women have come in many forms including verbal insults, hate speech and social media abuse (Mend.org.uk, 2016) as well as inequality in the labour market (Mansouri & Marotta, 2012). For example, in a study published by the Cabinet Office (2001), the term “ethnic penalty” was introduced to signify discrimination faced by minorities. The report found that Muslims (in particular Muslim women) suffered a greater ‘ethnic penalty’ than other minority groups. A recent attack in East London involved a woman being dragged by her hijab by two men, simply for identifying as Muslim (The Guardian, 2016). Muslim women also became indiscriminate victims of verbal and physical attacks following 9/11 (Geaves, 2004). However, there has been little research undertaken around the impact of the head or face veil in the UK.

Previous research does suggest wearing a head veil may indeed have a detrimental impact upon initial perception and subsequent treatment of Muslim women (Allen, 2015; Copsey et al, 2013). For example, Saroglou et al (2009) researched attitudes towards the veil, investigated through ‘subtle prejudice/ racism, values and anti-religious attitudes.’ The overall results of the study indicated that hostility towards the veil was a typical representation of ‘subtle anti-immigrant prejudice.’ A recent report by the Women’s Equality Committee (appointed by the House of Commons, July 2016) found that Muslim women, especially those wearing Islamic dress, represent what is considered a ‘backward’ faith that disrupts Western ways of life. As a result, the report found Muslim women experience very high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. Khattab and Johnston (2013) expanded on these results with a comprehensive study of Muslim women’s labour market disadvantages. They found Muslim women were less likely to be employed than their non-Muslim counterparts due to discrimination they faced for being Muslim.

Mahmud and Swami (2010) also conducted a study on the influence of the head veil on perceptions of women's attractiveness and intelligence. They found women wearing a hijab are perceived by non-Muslim *and* Muslim men as less attractive and less intelligent than unveiled women. El-Geledi and Bourhis (2012) conducted a study in Canada that tested the impact of the head and face veil. On being shown computer generated images of women in a face veil, head veil and women in western attire, the participants chose the images with the woman adorning the face veil and the head veil as least favourable and the woman in Western attire as more favourable.

Gallup (2009) undertook extensive research on issues that applied to Muslim women. He found that 30% of the British public believes that the hijab is a threat and that 16% of the British public would not want a Muslim neighbour. 53% of the British public felt it was necessary to remove the face veil to integrate and 32% said the same of the head veil (Gallup 2009). The hijab and veiling practices were also associated with a variety of assumptions and stereotypes among the British public. With 26% associating it with fanaticism and 31% associating it with oppression, a clear indication that significant challenges are facing Muslim women in the UK.

Meaning of head and face veil for its wearers

For clarity, in this study, the terms head veil and face veil are used to refer to the head and face coverings worn by Muslim women. The Muslim practice of covering the head with a veil, also known as a 'hijab', is a contentious, gendered, religious tradition with various symbolic meanings (Everett et al 2014). Wudud (2013) described the process of veiling (head and/or face) as the Sixth Pillar of Islam, and as a prerequisite to being a good Muslim. In a similar vein, it was viewed as a symbol of self-expression, modesty and devotion (Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough, 2003; Amer, 2014). Chakraborty and Zempi (2012) suggested that the 'veil', was a broad description given to both the head and face veil, which became increasingly identified in the West as a symbol of oppression and subordination practices. Additionally, it could be seen as an undeniable symbol of the 'otherness' of some Muslim women, in that it embodies all that is wrong, problematic and threatening about them (Amer, 2014; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). Given that the veiled Muslim woman is a symbol of Islam, Klaus and Kassel (2005) suggested that the veil went beyond a material and physical object, to become something ideological. Afhsar, Aitken and Franks (2005) asserted that the veil was not an indication of submissiveness or oppression, instead, the veil symbolised a liberating tool rather than a constraining device.

However, and as Wudud (2013) points out, the wearing of the head veil cannot be reduced to a single meaning, whether one of liberation or coercion. Rather, it takes a historical and cultural understanding of the wearer's personal decision to veil to distinguish between choice and oppression (Wudud, 2013). Conversely, the face veil, which covers the face and head but leaves the eyes exposed, is known as the 'niqab'. Furthermore, the choice to wear the face veil is viewed as a political move and an act of defiance at a time where Islamophobia is rampant and makes them vulnerable to attacks

(Williamson, 2014). For example, Werbner (2004) observed how international humiliation of Muslims since 9/11 and the sense of helplessness were assisting in drawing Muslims closer to their religious identity. In this context, the face veil stands as an identity marker for some Muslim women (Kabir, 2012).

However, there is little literature with regards to the position of women who adorn the face veil. As part of her research on the interactions of Muslim women who cover their face, Piela (2016) found recent literature had mostly focused on the 'appropriateness of women wearing the face veil in the courtroom.' Studies that engage face veil wearer's themselves are scarce. However, a notable exception includes [Tarlo's \(2007, 2010\)](#) research, in which interviewed women who wore the face veil. Tarlo (2010) argued that being 'Visibly Muslim' was the way young Muslim women expressed their identity and faith through their dress, and in the process created new forms of Islamic fashion and visual identity.

Gabriel and Hannan (2013), in their research on the dress requirements of Muslim women, conducted focus groups with Muslim women in Leicester. Some participants wore just the head veil, others wore the head and face veil, while some women chose to dress modestly but chose not to cover their head or face. The research also involved the opinions of Muslim clerics based in the UK. The findings indicated that some women believed that wearing the head and /or face veil demanded respect without being judged on their sexuality and thus enabled them to participate more in society (Gabriel & Hannan 2013). Furthermore, many women felt it provided a sense of protection from unwanted male attention while hiding their beauty and promoting modesty.

Stereotypes of the head and face veil

In contemporary society, two stereotypes are most prevalent in popular (political) discourse when it comes to Muslim women who veil (Evans 2006; Howard, 2012). These stereotypes are also used as the main arguments for banning the head and (in particular) the face veil. The first common misconception is that women who wear the head and/ or face veil are passive and obedient victims of a gender-oppressed religion, and in need of protection by the West (Macmaster & Lewis, 1998; Howard, 2012; Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014; Allen, 2015; Rashid, 2017). The second stereotype is that of the 'radicalised' Muslim woman who wears the head and/or face veil, in military clothes, while holding a

gun (Bullock & Jafri, 2002), who force their values on to the unwilling and undefended non-Muslims (Evans, 2006; Mullally, 2011).

However, these two stereotypes not only portray the Muslim woman as the 'other' (Allen, 2015) but are also contradictory in nature (Howard, 2012). On one hand, Muslim women are victims and need to be rescued from the oppressive religion that is Islam, but on the other hand, they are fundamentalists that everyone else needs rescuing from (Howard, 2012). For Poynting (2009), the head and/or face veil are seen as a symbol of non-integration, and as a result, Muslim women are compelled to explain their religious identities through a very narrow dichotomy of wearing veil versus not wearing a veil (Archer, 2012). Almost invariably, the stereotypes associated with visibly Muslim women suggest inferiority, irresponsibility and non-humanness, which then allows dominant groups to recreate white superiority, which in turn renders veiled women 'ideal subjects' against whom to enact anti-Muslim hostility (Zempi & Chakraborti; Perry, 2014).

It is clear that such misconceptions and stereotyping around Muslim women's decision to wear traditional Islamic clothing only serves to heighten sensitivities around dress and appearance (McKenna & Francis, 2018). This is highlighted by Janmohamed (2016) who reports on first-hand accounts provided by young Muslim women who feel frustrated at their status. They are defined as silent, obedient and, by and large, opposed to the West and are judged and face discrimination because of what they wear and how they look.

In her article 'Banning Islamic Veils', Howard, (2012) suggests that Muslim women wear the head and /or face veils for a variety of reasons but these are often 'ignored in political debates and court cases.' Instead, 'stereotypical ideas about the wearing of veils and the women who wear them' become the basis of decision-making. Yet, and despite the importance of hearing Muslim women's voices on this issue, consultation with women who have chosen to wear the head and/or face veil is notably absent from the literature (Howard, 2012; Perry, 2014).

Media Bias towards Islam and Muslim women

Since 9/11 British media's coverage on Islam and British Muslim communities has been substantial and deeply problematic (Moore et al, 2008; Sian, 2012; Werbner, 2009).

Hate crimes motivated by anti-Muslim feeling are encouraged by racist caricatures prevalent in social and media discourse, which further catalyse discriminatory outcomes

for Muslims (APPG, 2018). Allen (2015) suggests such widespread stereotyping of Muslim women, who are more visible, reaffirms already existing representations in media and political discourse you mention the media in the previous sentence but then imply this is a new point: most notably about being oppressed and subjugated. Often the narrative is that of Islam and Muslims being portrayed as a threat to national security as well as the British way of life (Sardar & Davis, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Poole, 2006). Richardson (2004) carried out an analysis of the linguistic and social practices in the reporting of Islam and Muslims in British newspapers over four months in 1997. Four reoccurring themes emerged, with Muslims being portrayed as terrorists or extremists; as a threat to democracy; as a social threat (particularly Muslim women); and as a military threat.

Over a decade ago, Moore, Mason and Lewis (2008) analysed over 900 articles on Islam in the British Press from 2000-2008. They found an increase in stories that focused on differences between Islamic culture and the 'West'. However, Moore, Mason and Lewis (2008) also noted that stories that focussed on attacks on Muslims were reported a lot less. Sian and Sayyid's (2012) study analysed various constructions and representation of Muslims circulating in the British Press. Their work exposed the dominance of Islamophobia in the majority of the newspapers examined. This reflected the wider social, public and political discourse surrounding Muslims as fundamentally 'problematic' and as representing the 'enemy' of the West. A year later, From the position of linguistics and critical discourse analysis, Baker, Gabrielatos and McEney (2013) investigated the representation of Islam in the British press of almost 143 million words of over 200,000 newspaper items about Muslims in the period between 1998 to 2009. Their study found Islam was constructed as alien or foreign, outmoded or backward, anti-intellectual or irrational, oppressive, restrictive and/or intolerant, misogynist, extremist and/or fanatic, causing conflict, dangerous and a threat, and associated with fundamentalism and terrorism (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEney, 2013).

Conversely, Sian and Sayyid's (2012) report highlighted in an article in the Guardian newspaper, which provided a fair, critical and balanced approach of Muslim representations and condemned anti-Muslim representations embedded in the press. In 2015, Liam Byrne, MP for Birmingham Hodge Hill, home to one of the largest British Muslim communities, ran a poll in his constituency on anti-Muslim hate and found 96% of his Muslim constituents believed Islamophobia was on the rise. With 82% singling out the media as a particular contributor (Warsi, 2017).

Piela's (2016) study about the face veil identified a gap in the academic literature on women who wear the face veil and their representations in media. The study gave an insight into resentment towards the wearing of the face veil encountered in the British media, while the voices of the women who veiled were ignored; even the women who did comment on their experiences of wearing a face veil were unreported by many mainstream media outlets (Piela, 2016). The argument that Islamic veils went against equality of the sexes and thus against fundamental Western values is still widely used by the media to defend bans on the wearing of both the head and face veil (Alibhai-Brown, 2011). It is also an argument used by many feminists in favour of head and face veil bans, as they consider them necessary to liberate Muslim women, perceiving the veil as a violation of a woman's right to equality with men (Howard, 2012).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Research Paradigm

According to Guba (1990), research paradigms can be characterised through their ontology i.e. what is the reality. Furthermore, it is good practice to outline the basis for claiming to know what we say we know when undertaking any research (Kuhn, 1971). A research paradigm is a prevailing agreed system of thinking 'shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed,' and within which research is conducted (Kuhn, 1971; Coolican 2004). Grix (2004) argues that without ontological and epistemological positions it is impossible to engage in any form of research.

Epistemology addresses the 'nature of knowledge and how it is constructed' (Hamlyn, 1995), and the methodology that addresses the strategy and procedures required to acquire the knowledge (Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) identifies four interlinked elements in the research process: 'epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods.' Crotty (1998) suggests because ontology is concerned with 'what is', it would sit alongside and emerge with epistemology and inform the theoretical perspective that underpins the research.

Philosophical stance

As a starting point for my philosophical framework, I began by considering the ontological dimension. According to Blaikie (2007), ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality. Furthermore, the theories tend to fall into one of two mutually opposing and exclusive categories, relativists and realists (Burr, 2003). The nature of the 'reality' that I am exploring is based on the aims and objectives of the study, which is seeking to establish current attitudes towards, and experiences of, wearing various levels of head and face covering, among Muslim and non-Muslim women in the UK. To develop the study, I was required to first articulate whether the ontological position I would adopt would be realist or relativist. To do this I need to answer questions such as: What did I already know about head and face veils? What was the basis of this knowledge? How would I apply this existing knowledge in the research process? What were the realities facing Muslim women wearing head differing levels of head and face covering? And how could I explain these realities within the context of the study?

Constructionism as an ontological position states that 'social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors,' through social interaction and in a 'constant state of revision' (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.19-20). In other words, these are linked meanings, for example, constructionism concerning the social world and constructionism about the nature of knowledge. In this study, I will be using 'constructionism' as an ontological position relating to social objects and categories that views them as socially constructed (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

According to Paterson and Leung (2016) reality is made up of perceptions and interactions of living subjects, whereby facts are culturally and historically located, and therefore behaviours, attitudes and experiences are subject to interpretation (Paterson & Leung, 2016). This study assumes that there is no single reality or truth, rather it is subjective and differs from person to person (Lincoln & Denzin, 2011). As Paterson & Leung, (2016) have suggested, subjective ontology approaches reality from the perspective that each experiences their own place and time in the world differently. For example, the subjective experience of a Muslim woman adorning a head and/or face veil is likely to be different from that of an unveiled non-Muslim woman at the same time and place. This emphasis on multiple interpretations of reality informed the development of my philosophical framework.

While ontology is concerned with the nature of social reality (Dillon & Wals, 2006; Ramey & Grubb, 2009), epistemology is the study, theory and justification of knowledge. Both ontological and epistemological aspects concern what is commonly known as a person's 'world view', which has a significant influence on the characteristic of reality, described by Cobern (1991) as making sense of the world, and by Berger and Luckmann (1991) as making things plausible to a person from a specific standpoint. From an objectivistic worldview, discoverable reality exists independently of the researcher (Pring, 2004). In contrast, the constructivist worldview suggests that realities are local and specific in the sense that they vary between groups of individuals (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Gergen (1999) in his book 'An Invitation to Social Construction,' suggests that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon 'by and between' people who experience it. In the context of this study, individuals construct their knowledge by their past experiences, personal views and cultural background. My epistemological position will be within the parameters of a constructivist discourse, whereby different people construct meaning in different ways, even though they may be explaining the same phenomena (Crotty, 1998).

Theoretical Perspective: Social Constructionism

Crotty (1998) suggests that a theoretical perspective is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it, while informing the methodological and philosophical stance. (Crotty,1998). Social constructionism as a theoretical perspective allows individuals to, 'adopt critical attitudes towards their conventional lenses for perceiving and understanding the world and their own selves' (Burr, 2003). Burr and Strang (1995), suggest the premise of social constructionism is its anti-realist position, which views society as socially constructed based on interactions within historical, cultural and social context when trying to account for human phenomena. According to Hirschman (2006), such contexts are what makes meaning possible; subsequent this meaning makes 'reality'. Furthermore, it interprets the nature and existence of something like the product of socially accepted without a doubt (McLeod, 1997; Burr 2003). Burr and Strang, (1995) also suggest that social constructionism enables us to re-analyse the knowledge we hold of ourselves and our world, by challenging existing frameworks of understanding.

However, Haslanger (1995) views some problems with the notion of social constructionism that reality is the product of social relationships, practices, and discourses. He suggests that the theory cannot explain how the 'social' or 'discourse' comes into existence if there is yet nothing to socially construct it. Haslanger (1995) suggests a contradiction in the social constructionist account if human practices could have arisen without social constructions. Furthermore, Haslanger, (1995) describes an undeniable existence of resistance to powerful regimes, oppositional discourse and challenges. However, he argues if 'reality' is a manifestation of discourse, in the interests of the dominant discourse, how is it possible for a critical perspective to arise above dominant norms that permeate through the social context. However, Friedman (2006) moderates the criticism of social constructionism by suggesting dominant groups do not always prevail, discourse is merely one practice of constructionism with some aspects of reality or human experience are not socially constructed. Furthermore, things are socially constructed by the discourse but the discourse of dominant groups does not always dominate the social context (Friedman, 2006).

This study applies the social constructionist approach to critically reflect on the construction of the veil and draws upon Goffman's 1963 (DeFleur & Goffman, 1964) notion of stigmatisation. McLeod (1997) recommends research based on the social constructionist approach should aim to produce knowledge that is not fixed and

universally valid, rather open up an appreciation of what is possible. Gergen (1985) suggests social constructionism may be defined as a perspective, which believes that a great deal of human life exists due to social and interpersonal influences. Knowledge and truth are created not discovered and the world can only be known with people's experience of it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this study, this implies that the women will construct their reality on the veil as well as reconstruct and moderate their social status, discuss imposed roles and stereotypes and distinguishes themselves from others within their own social and cultural context (Rapmund & Moore, 2000).

Similarly, Doan (1997) prefers social constructionist stories based on a person's lived experience rather than on expert knowledge. However, this also implies the language used by the researcher will be a reflection of their way of viewing and making sense of the world, which in turn is influenced by their social and cultural background. Berger & Luckman (1991) suggest that conversation is the most important means of maintaining; modifying and reconstructing subjective reality, while McNamee and Gergen, (1992) suggest the importance of conversational narrative whereby, understanding each other is achieved through changing stories and self-descriptions. Burr and Strang (1995) suggest language precedes concept in social constructionism thus is a means of transmitting thoughts and feelings which then become concepts.

According to Goffman (DeFleur & Goffman, 1964), the rules of social order are the norms that govern all forms of social communication. The majority and therefore dominant groups in society set these social norms, and people choose either to follow or challenge them (DeFleur & Goffman, 1964). Much of Goffman's work was on American society, whereby minority groups such as Blacks or Jews who did not conform to the White American social order were stigmatised. As a result minority groups responded with 'stigma symbols' that further marked them out and accentuated their difference to the set norms. Applied to this research, this perspective raises issues around symbolic meaning given to the head and face veil, Muslim identity and stigma. Stigmatisation is understood here as the differentiation and condemnation of a social group by reference to a normative other (Goffman, 1968). In his book '*Behaviours in Public Spaces*' Goffman (1963) suggests 'an obligation to convey certain information when in the presence of others'. Whereby there is often an agreement, not only about the meaning of visible behaviours but also about interactions that should be seen. Goffman (1963) implies, regardless of individuals abiding by certain norms, expectations of interactions still prevail. Thus a woman wearing a face veil blocks interaction creating what Goffman term 'involvement shield' which he signifies as being 'out of play' Goffman (1963).

In this study, the accounts of women wearing head and/or face veil were visible declarations of their religious identity. Abbas (2007) suggests Muslim minorities in the West face multiple issues concerning the adaptation of religious or cultural norms and values and everyday citizenship. Drawing again on Goffman's (1963) work, the stigma that is known or visible is known as 'discredited' and 'discreditable' when the stigma is unknown and can be concealed. Furthermore, the experiences of stigma can differ based on whether the stigmatised attribute can be seen or not. In this study, the nature of the 'differentness' is the head and face veil, which would be described as 'discredited' stigma because it is completely visible. As a consequence of this conspicuousness, the 'discredited' wearer of the head and /or face veil may be more likely to expect and experience stigmatisation (Chaudoir, Earnshaw & Andel, 2013).

Research Methods Qualitative research

Denzin and Lincoln, (2000) claim that qualitative researchers must adopt an 'interpretive, and naturalistic' approach to the subject matter in order to make sense of the meanings people attach to a particular 'phenomenon.' Similarly, Myers (2009, p.5) suggests qualitative research helps researchers understand people and the 'social and cultural contexts' in which they live. This is achieved depending on what data collection and data analysis methods are used (Creswell, 2003). In contrast, quantitative research presents statistical results represented by numerical or statistical data (Payne & Payne, 2004).

Phase 1: Focus group

Phase one of data collection entailed two focus group discussions. Each group had 4-6 people, which should allow for optimal discussion and facilitation (Bloor et al. 2001). The focus group schedule consisted of ten questions, which were prioritised in order of importance. The questions were open-ended for the participants to be able to guide the discussion. This approach allowed for a basic understanding of the phenomena under study and allowed me to take into account the views of the participants within-group interaction. As (Rogers, Sharp & Preece, 2011) suggest, in a group, people develop and express ideas they would not have thought about on their own. The focus groups direct the interview guide in phase 2 of data analysis, which consist of semi-structured

interviews. These individual interviews would then look to explore the general nature of the comments from different individuals (Shneiderman and Plaisant, 2005).

Gibbs (1997) suggests focus group research 'involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic.' The main advantage of this method is to draw upon aspects from respondents, such as their attitudes, feelings, experiences, or beliefs in a way that would not be feasible if using other methods. For example, when the culture of a particular group is of interest, focus groups allow for the exploration of the degree of consensus on the topic (Morgan, 1993). This was particularly useful in my study as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of why individuals hold a certain opinion on the head and face veil. Furthermore, whether these views resonated with the current public and political discourse. Another advantage of using focus group discussions as a research method is that it allowed me to gain a larger amount of data in a shorter period (Gibbs, 1997).

The data collection for this present study was broken down into three phases, consisting of focus groups, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and telephone interviews. Phase one entailed two focus group discussions. Each group had 6 people, which would allow for optimal discussion and facilitation (Bloor et al. 2001). The interview guide consisted of ten predetermined questions based on the aims and objectives of the present study (see appendix 1). The difficulties of assembling a focus group were made apparent while attempting to recruit participants for the non-Muslim focus group. Despite numerous attempts, I was unable to set a date for the focus group discussion ensuring everyone's availability. Furthermore, I was aware the topic may be perceived as sensitive and focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous from others in the group (Gibbs, 1997), this may have deterred people from participating. After speaking to the potential participants, it was agreed that individual face-to-face interviews might be more appropriate. However, this also proved difficult as many of the participants were students and had little time. It was finally decided that phone interviews would be in everyone's best interest.

Sample

How we select a sample of individuals to be research participants requires us to identify a sampling technique. Because this research advocates interpretive qualitative methods,

it will support the use of smaller numbers of people and require less complex sampling techniques (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Non-probability sampling is relevant when the study is looking to discover what occurs, as well as the implications and relationships of these occurrences (Honnigmann, 1982, cited in Burgess 1984). The most common form of non-probability sampling comes in is purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). This is based on the premise that the researcher is intending to discover, understand and gain insight into a certain topic. Therefore selecting a 'hand-picked' sample from which they can learn the most from (Denscombe, 2007). The benefit of this is that the researcher can focus in on the (purpose of) research question at hand (Denscombe, 2007). Therefore a purposeful sampling technique was utilised in the present study.

The details of the participants for the first focus group are provided in table 1. The age range was 24-40 years old. Participants were from similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds including British Indian and British Pakistani. Five participants spoke English as a first language and one spoke English well but as a second language. All participants were from Kirklees in Yorkshire.

Table 1: Muslim participants- focus group 1

Participant	Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Children	Veil
1	Rizwana	British Indian	34	Married	Teaching assistant	3	Head & face
2	Leila	British Indian	40	Married	Housewife	4	Head
3	Sara	British Pakistani	25	Engaged	Teacher	0	Head
4	Selina	British Indian	26	Married	Administrator	0	Head
5	Amani	British Indian	27	Married	Housewife	2	Head
6	Ayisha	British Pakistani	24	Single	Fashion designer	0	Head

The second Muslim focus group had an age range of 24-57 years old. Participants were from a Bangladeshi ethnic background, with one participant identifying as White British Bangladeshi Muslim. Two participants spoke English as a first language and four participants spoke other languages including English regularly. All participants lived in and around the Greater Manchester area.

Table 2: Muslim participants- focus group 2

Participant	Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Children	Veil
1	Na'ima	British Bangladeshi	57	Married	Housewife	4	Head
2	Asmaa	British Bangladeshi	44	Married	Housewife	3	Head
3	Zakiyah	British Bangladeshi	46	Married	Lunch-time supervisor	3	Head
4	Sanaa	Dual Heritage English/Bangladeshi	38	Married	Teacher	3	Head
5	Miriam	Bangladeshi	24	Married	Housewife	1	Head
6	Najma	British Bangladeshi	55	Married	Housewife	4	Head and face

Research instrument

The interview guide was developed with the research aims and objectives in mind and would influence the development of the interview schedule for phase two of data collection (see appendix 1). I used open-ended questions influenced by the epistemological and theoretical frameworks of this study. A list of exploratory questions was put together based on the constructionist assumption of multiple realities and dynamic meanings (Fortune, Reid & Miller, 2013). A constructionist view would suggest the veil is a social construction developed through interaction and dialogue within specific communities and open to multiple interpretations (Fortune, Reid & Miller, 2013). It can also be argued that the veil is considered to be a social construction through which women moderate their social status whilst distancing themselves from roles and stereotypes (Rapmund & Moore, 2000). The questions were broken down into two sections. The first part explored attitudes towards the head and face veil, while the second part investigated real-life experiences of wearing head and or face veil. The interview guide was designed to be used both in the Muslim and non-Muslim focus groups. Therefore, achieving a point of balance with regards to language was crucial.

Research procedure

The method of contact was initially through emails to the University students and staff by my supervisors, the main respondents were non-Muslims. I then called prospective sources over the phone to explain the research study. This included a Muslim social worker that I had previously worked with. Because he was a prominent member of the local community, I felt he would be a good person to contact. He then introduced me to other people involved in the Muslim community, who managed to find participants for the

first focus group. Similarly, other community workers were contacted for potential participants for the study in different areas around North England. After assuring the prospective participants that confidentiality would be paramount, two community groups agreed to participate. The general orientation for obtaining data was through predetermined and sequenced questions. The beginning questions were informal and helped the participants to get talking and thinking about the topic. (Krueger & Casey, 2008) suggest as the discussion continues, the questions should become more specific and more focussed. With the questions near the end of the discussion yielding the most useful information. Because of the sensitivity of the topic of investigation, I drew upon the work of Kitzinger (2000) who stresses how 'interpersonal dynamics within the group enable participants to gain mutual comfort and reassurance.' This was ensured because the participants from both focus groups were all members of an existing community group; therefore the dynamics within the group would facilitate disclosure and discussion in a supportive environment.

Identities were disguised with the use of pseudonyms, whereby participants chose from a list of names (female Muslim authors chosen randomly) on sticky labels. Before agreeing to the research, participants were given an information sheet which provided brief and clear information on the essential elements of the study (see appendix 2). The consent form allowed the participant to agree or disagree with each statement through yes/no tick box. Finally, they were asked to sign, print their name and date the form (see appendix 3)

Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

Phase two of data collection used face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Whereby the participants were asked some closed as well as some open-ended questions to ensure an informal conversation-style interview (Coolican, 2004; Payne & Payne, 2004). Semi-structured interviews also allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their terms (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Aligning with the Social constructionist epistemology, the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to understand people's feelings and perceptions as well the interactions with other people as a part of social reality (Mason, 2002). Merriam (1998), suggests the responsibility is on the researcher to collect data in a way that attempts to capture a real-life situation without the outcome being affected.

While all participants are asked the same questions, follow-up or probing questions are particularly useful for exploring more in-depth views on a certain topic (Van Teijlingen, 2014). And despite its expensive nature, the data collection is expected to be detailed and rich (Denscombe, 2007). Semi-structured interviews are well suited for exploring attitudes, values and beliefs (Van Teijlingen & Forrest, 2014) and when embarking on transcription (Denscombe,2007). However, there is potential for interviewer bias because the interviewer has little control when interviewee's deviate from the question, personal appearance or tone of voice could mean a misinterpretation of their response. Furthermore, interviewees could fabricate their answers, which could impact the study (McCrossan, 1991; Payne & Payne 2004).

Sample

When it came to the selection of samples, there was a need to identify and contact relevant respondents. Snowball sampling emerged through a process of reference from one person to the next. Snowball sampling emerges through the process of reference and is possibly the most common form of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009; Denscombe, 2007). It involves using personal contacts that meet the criteria who then nominate others and thus accumulate the sample (Patton, 2002; Coolican, 2004; Denscombe, 2007; Merriam, 2009). However, it is argued that selection bias could limit the validity of the sample because it is not chosen at random. Rather, it is dependent on the subjectivity of participants who nominate others (Kaplan, Korf & Sterk,1987). Snowball sampling offered many practical advantages for this research. For example, Muslim women in the community who were willing to share their experiences of wearing the head and /or face-covering may be difficult to locate. Similarly, non-Muslim women who have views on the topic may be a hidden population in the community. Using social media such as Facebook and Twitter will allow me to obtain evidence of the experiences of these groups (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

The Muslim interviewees had an age range of between 18-55 years old. Participants were from a diverse ethnic background. With one participant identifying as White British and another as Hungarian. Two participants spoke other languages including English regularly, while the remainder spoke English as a first language. Participants were from Sheffield and Manchester. Four of the nine interviewees adorned the head and face veil. While the others wore the head veil alone. The details of the participants for the Muslim women's face-to-face interviews are provided in table 3.

Table 3: Muslim participants- semi-structured interviews

Participant	Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Children	Veil
1	Ausma	British Pakistani	18	Single	Student	0	Head
2	Nadia	Hungarian	45	Married	Customer care assistant	0	Head
3	Tanwi	Pakistani	55	Widowed	Cupping therapist	4	Head & face
4	Firoozeh	Bangladeshi	49	Married	Housewife	3	Head& face
5	Samina	White British	43	Married	Manager	4	Head
6	Qaisra	British Pakistani	45	Married	Carer	3	Head
7	Maheera	British Bangladeshi	29	Married	Unemployed	3	Head & face
8	Benazir	British Pakistani	47	Divorced	Interpreter	4	Head
9	Uzma	British Bangladeshi	25	Married	Housewife	1	Head

Research instrument

Many researchers like to use semi-structured interviews because the interview schedule can be prepared ahead of time. This allows the interviewer to 'be prepared and appear competent during the interview' (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interview guide for the focus group worked as pilot questions for the interviews. Questions were then prepared for the semi-structured interviews based on how the respondents had framed their answers. Any emerging theme such as media bias, allowed questions to be modified for the interview schedule (see appendix 4). Once the appropriate themes were identified, I was required to decide on the level of detail for structuring the questions, avoiding any leading or emotive questions. After that, the questions were drafted and put into order for the interview schedule. Elmir et al (2011) suggest face-to-face interviews are an ideal method of data collection when exploring sensitive topics such as this present study. The interview questions were probing the participant to talk about their experiences of veiling

in the context of religious affiliation, prejudice and discrimination perhaps even violence. Doody & Noonan (2013) and Knox & Burkard (2009) suggest yielding rich and meaningful data while allowing participants to feel safe and at ease to discuss sensitive experiences with a stranger requires flexibly using an interview schedule and using appropriate language to phrase the questions. Even abandoning the interview schedule if a participant is emotionally struggling with some aspect of the question (Scott & Garner, 2013).

Research procedure

With the snowball sampling technique in mind, I began by approaching the local mosque to find potential participants. If this recruitment process proved successful, the participants would then be asked to nominate other women who would be relevant to the study. Furthermore, participants who took part in the focus groups were also asked to nominate others who would be interested in taking part in the study. These women were then contacted and if they agreed would be included in the sample. Each of the women would nominate other people they knew. Denscombe (2007) suggests using this 'multiplier effect' can accumulate numbers quickly as well as provide a reference by the person who is nominating. Thus enhancing the credibility of the study. Most of the interviews sessions were held in community centres. Other venues included mosques, participants 'houses and coffee shops. I tried to make the process as convenient as possible for the interviewee's.

Drawing upon Gillham's (2004) suggestions for effective interviewing, I prepared for the interview by giving the interviewee a clear idea of why they had been asked to participate; the purpose of the interview and the research project; an idea of the approximate length of the interview as well as gain consent to record (giving reasons why). Questions were then put in order of that they appeared on the interview schedule. Payne & Pane (2004) suggest the participant should be led from general first questions to more specific ones. With the interviewees consent, the discussion was audio recorded, with some basic notes also made. In this study, I intended to make participants feel at ease by interviewing them in familiar surroundings such as their own home. To further facilitate a conversation-style interview, having a thorough knowledge of the interview questions and topics before data collection was crucial. At the start of each interview the

participant was asked to describe their veiling practices, this broad question allowed scope and flexibility for each interviewee to tell her own story.

Phase 3: Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted for all the non-Muslim participants. According to Van Teijlingen and Forrest, (2014) telephone interviewing may allow participants to relax and feel able to discuss sensitive information. Another advantage of telephone interviewing was the access to hard-to-reach respondent groups as suggested by (Cresswell,1998). Who may otherwise not have had their views represented (Miller,1995). Thus adopting this method of interviewing provided an opportunity to obtain the data from potential participants who did appear reluctant to discuss face-to-face the sensitive issue around veiling. However, despite advantages such as being reasonably easy to organise and cheaper than face-to-face interviews (Denscombe, 2007), Van Teijlingen and Forrest (2014) suggest the lack of visual cues could result in loss of non-verbal data and impact the interpretation of participant responses.

Sample

Similar to the process of recruiting for the Muslim focus group, the participants for phase three of data analysis were purposively selected for being non-Muslim. The advantage of using this particular approach for sampling was that I could gain attitudes towards veiling from an alternative perspective. Many of the recruits had contacted me after seeing posters put up around the University campus or after receiving an email that had been sent out to postgraduate (see appendix 5). Due to time restraints, I was only able to recruit 6 participants for the study, two of which pulled out due to unforeseen personal commitments. The non-Muslim interviewees that were available for telephone interviewing were aged between 34-45 years old. All participants were from a White British background. Participants were from North England. The details of the participants for the telephone interviews are provided in table 4.

Table 4: Non- Muslim participants- semi-structured interviews

Participant	Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Children
1	Charlotte	White British	34	Single	Researcher	1
2	Emily	White British	58	Married	Retired	2
3	Jane	White British	43	Unmarried	Admin Assistant	2
4	Anne	White British	45	Unmarried	Self-employed	3

Research instrument

The interview schedule for the non-Muslim discussion was considerably shorter than the Muslim interview schedule (see appendix 6). The reason for this was that I felt I would be unable to record the interview electronically and therefore would need to take notes by hand. This was an error that I blame on inexperience, and on reflection, I could have recorded the interview by setting the phone to the speaker mode.

The interview schedule for the telephone interviews was designed based on similar themes that were used for the Muslim interview schedule. Likewise, once the appropriate themes were identified for the non-Muslim schedule, I was required to decide on the level of detail for structuring the questions. Gillham (2004) suggests that the telephone interview should be more structured than its face-to-face counterpart because it is completed at a more brisk pace to avoid the call lasting for hours and becoming intrusive. As with the previous discussion, the interview questions were exploring attitudes towards a very sensitive and current topic. Van Teijlingen, (2014) and Fenig & Levav, (1993) suggests this method of telephone interviewing is advantageous when researching such sensitive topics. Whereby, participants prefer the lack of face-to-face interaction during telephone interviewing when discussing sensitive subjects and is perceived as a higher level of anonymity (Greenfield, Midanik & Rogers, 2000). Nevertheless, the option of abandoning the interview schedule if a participant is emotionally struggling with some aspect of the question (Scott & Garner, 2013) applied to the telephone interview too.

Research procedure

All the interviewees were sent an information sheet (see appendix 2) and a consent form (see appendix 3) via email, and dates and times were organised according to the

availability and preference of the participant. On reflection perhaps it would have been more productive if I had also emailed the interview schedule to the participants as preparation for the interview. Holstein & Gubrium (in Desai, 2004) suggest making the schedule available before the actual interview establishes trust as a basis for good rapport. Furthermore, it serves to clarify any questions the participant may have regarding the questions, as well indicate the duration of the interview (Holstein & Gubrium, in Desai, 2004). All participants were initially asked if the time was convenient and the option of calling back later if it was not. Denscombe (2007) suggest this retains a 'personal' element to the interaction. On proceeding, the process of interviewing was similar to the Muslim face-to-face interviews, a brief explanation of the purpose of the study was offered and the participant was led from general first questions to more specific ones towards the end (Payne & Pane, 2004).

How reflexivity relates to my research

According to Mansfield (2006), reflexivity is an 'examination of the filters and lenses through which you see the world.' Generally, it examines beliefs, judgements and practices of the researcher as well as how they may influence the research (Denscombe, 2007; Hammond & wellington 2013).

It is evident from the ontological and epistemological discussion that reality is different for everyone based on our unique understandings and experiences of the world (Berger & Luckman, 1991). Positions of the researcher, such as gender, race, age, personal experiences may impact the research in three major ways (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Finlay, 2000). Firstly, accessing the sample could be affected because participants may be more willing to open up and share their experiences with a researcher whom they perceive as one of them or 'sympathetic to their situation' (De Tona, 2006). Secondly, there could be an impact on the nature of the researcher– participant relationship, which, in turn, could affect how much information that participants feel comfortable disclosing; thus, a veiled Muslim woman may feel more comfortable discussing the veil with another woman who is also veiled. Kacen & Chaitin (2006) suggest that the 'worldview' and background of the researcher affects how he or she 'chooses the lens for filtering the information gathered from participants and making meaning of it,' this could potentially influence the findings and conclusions of the study.

To illustrate how I could influence the research, I draw upon the constructionist epistemology to reflexivity, my own experience of the head veil. My interest in the topic was first triggered as an undergraduate when I elected to wear the head veil. Similar to what Goffman's (1963) termed 'stigma symbol' I began adorning the head veil to accentuate my Muslim identity after the demonisation of Muslims post 9/11 (Morey & Yaqin, 2011; Peek, 2005). However, I found the experience challenging, not only from the practical aspect but more so with the perceived attitudes of others. The thought of removing the veil occurred to me many times over the years, which made me wonder what it was that contributed to my feelings of uneasiness and what factors motivated me to continue wearing it. I also wondered why some people appeared to accept the veil as a religious symbol while others questioned and challenged its role in UK society. As Finlay (1998) suggests, I began to accept that as the researcher I was a part of the research.

The constructionist philosophy, Woolgar (1991) concluded that anybody of scientific knowledge is the product of social, cultural-historical and political processes. Therefore, the versions of reality are constructed according to schemata, stereotypes, pressures and socially accepted norms (Woolgar, 1991). Researching attitudes towards and experiences of a sensitive topic such as the head and face veil led me to question whether my own identity including my background and beliefs would impact or influence the research. Subsequently, whether I was going to wear the veil during the data collection phase. Etherington (2004) suggests to be reflexive requires awareness of our responses and to be able to make choices on how to respond to them. If I did not take these processes into account when considering the research methods, I could indirectly disadvantage participants. As Scott & Garner (2013) assert, the researchers' role; identity and personality require them to be alert about how they conduct themselves in the research. The 'othering' process creates relations of dominance in the form of 'them-us' (Dominelli & Campling, 2002) therefore I would need to consider how women who veiled, felt about discussing their experiences with non-Muslim women who held strong views in relation to the veil and who may not feel comfortable speaking openly in front of women who were covered. Finch and Lewis (2003) suggest it is particularly important that 'everyone is in the same boat' to facilitate disclosure and discussion. Finlay (2002) suggests that to increase the integrity and trustworthiness of the research, the researcher must engage in explicit, self-aware analysis of their role.

On analysis, I felt I was in a relatively advantaged position. As a researcher of Muslim background I was considered as an 'in-group' person by the Muslim participants because

we shared religion and to some extent culture insofar as I veiled and therefore they included me as one of 'them'. An influential factor in gaining support for my study was explaining to Muslim participants the need for the general public to know about the realities of British Muslim women who wear the head and or face veil. This was particularly useful for the first focus group that was located in an area with a large number of women who adorned the face veil as well as the head veil. Furthermore, because I was from Pakistani/ Asian heritage as well as being well versed in reading and speaking Urdu (the official language of Pakistan), the Pakistani interviewees who struggled with English could speak their native language and still participate. However, I was not as familiar with the Bangladeshi or Indian culture but we still connected as Muslims and that made the interview process much easier. All the interviews with the Bangladeshi and Indian participants were conducted in English, as most of them were either British born or had lived in Britain for a very long time.

Despite being born and bred in England and feeling very much 'British', for the first time I reflected on how I would be perceived by the non-Muslim participants if I visibly identified as Muslim. Okely (2007) in her work on 'embodiment' argues that researchers often have to learn to adapt the way they dress to fit in with and be accepted by the participants. I was conscious that some of my friends and acquaintances would often speak about the atrocities committed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, or the 9/11 tragedy and even around issues of Islamic attire. While some emphasised integration others were concerned with immigration and the influx of refugees. So before recruiting my non-Muslim participants I was mindful of how the topic around head and face veils could be construed (especially in this current climate) and how it would make a non-Muslim feel being interviewed by someone who was visibly Muslim. Consequently, I felt it would be in the best interests of the non-Muslim group to remove my veil during the discussions, thus removing any potential barriers that could affect disclosure and discussion. This was however not necessary as the interviews conducted with the non-Muslim participants were over the telephone.

Ethics, Trust and Confidentiality

Denscombe (2007) suggests that research should always be based on ethical practice particularly while collecting and analysing data and disseminating findings. Creswell (2003) states that the researcher must respect the rights, needs and values of the participants. Researchers are expected to abide by principles such as respecting the

rights and dignity of those participating in the research, avoid any harm to the participants and operate with honesty and integrity (Denscombe, 2007). This is further reinforced by Downy & Calman (in Homan, 1991) who state the interest of science and society should never take precedence over considerations related to the well being of the subject.

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Huddersfield's School of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics Panel (SREP). Pending approval, the recruitment of participants suitable for inclusion in the study would be undertaken by distributing information leaflet and posters at the University, community centres and cafes. A contact number and tear-off slip allowed participants to make an informed decision on the participation of the study. 'Anonymity and confidentiality' are central features of ethical research practice in social research (Crow & Wiles, 2008). To preserve this discretion, the use of pseudonyms for participants will be used. The rationale behind this was to assure participants that the data they would provide would not be traced back to them or identify them in any written or verbal report from this study.

Participants are told that data is stored in line with university regulations whereby they are kept safe, under lock and key until they have been transcribed, after which they can be permanently deleted. All participants will be given the contact details of relevant support services. Also, posters and leaflets to promote the study will contain information signposting individuals to relevant support organisations should they require the need. To safeguard my safety, I was required by SREP and advised by my supervisors to arrange appointments in public places. While visiting a participant in their own home, I was required to notify either one of my supervisors the location and the beginning and expected end time of the interviews. I always carried a mobile telephone with me in case I needed help. Finally, I was required to create new social media accounts to avoid giving my details away to participants. I was also given details of health and well-being services at the university should I require their services.

Data Analysis

Denscombe (2007), suggest that the process of analysis involves the 'search for themes and concepts that lie behind the surface content of the data'. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as a process of organising data, breaking it into smaller units to code and synthesise. This would then enable emerging patterns to

be identified. In the analysis of data for both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, I will follow the suggestions of Ritchie & Spencer (1994) stages of framework analysis. A key feature of the framework method is that data is traceable from the analysis of raw data to final themes, thus enhancing the validity and credibility of findings (Gale et al 2013).

Stages of analysis

Transcription and Familiarisation of data

The first stage of the process is data preparation and familiarisation through transcription, to gain an overview of the collected (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Ramlaul (2010) suggests familiarisation through the researcher him/herself immersed in the raw data by reading and re-reading each transcript until she is familiar with the data. In light of the complexities involved in transcription, I used both the electronic and written method to record both group and individual interviews. All the data was recorded for later analysis using Microsoft word. For small qualitative studies, De Chesnay (2015) states there is no need for expensive software to process data.

Whilst transcribing, care was taken not to alter the participant's' unique language characteristics. Lindergren (2010) suggests any changes could affect the way data is analysed and interpreted. This proved particularly challenging while transcribing interviews where the participant did not speak English as a first language. The difficulty was determining which words should remain in the original language and which words should be translated without impacting the data (Lindergren, 2010; Payne & Payne 2004). For example, a Bangladeshi participant used the term 'gorah' to describe a white person. Raw data were identified using reference numbers, replacing participant names with pseudonyms (Denscombe, 2007; Lindergren, 2010). For example focus group one was referenced as FG1Aisha or interviews three was referenced as INT3Firoozeh.

Coding of data

After familiarisation, the next stage of Ritchie & Spencer's (1994) stages of analysis involves exploring the data for obvious and reoccurring themes. This began with the process of coding to make sense of the data that would enable me to highlight patterns and make relevant data comparisons (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). The initial coding would document distinct patterns to categorise that part of the data (De Chesney, 2015). In the present study, this was done by way of handwritten markers in the margins of the transcriptions. The coded words or segments were highlighted, and categories developed by considering each line, phrase or paragraph of the transcript in an attempt to summarise what the participant is describing (see appendix 7).

Developing an analytical framework

A tree diagram was used to represent relationships, among themes and concepts (Lewis-Back, Bryman & Liao, 2004). Using the tree diagram codes are grouped into categories, thus forming the analytical framework (table 5) (Gale et al. 2013). As coding progressed, the categories developed were grouped into broader categories and then into themes. For example, religion and modesty were re-occurring themes for adorning the veil; this was then grouped as 'reasons for veiling'. Then into a broader theme of attitudes towards veiling which also encompassed the views of non-Muslim women. The final framework consisted of three overarching themes, clustered with fourteen sub-themes, each with a brief description of what is summarised under that code (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1

Analytical Framework: Muslim Participants

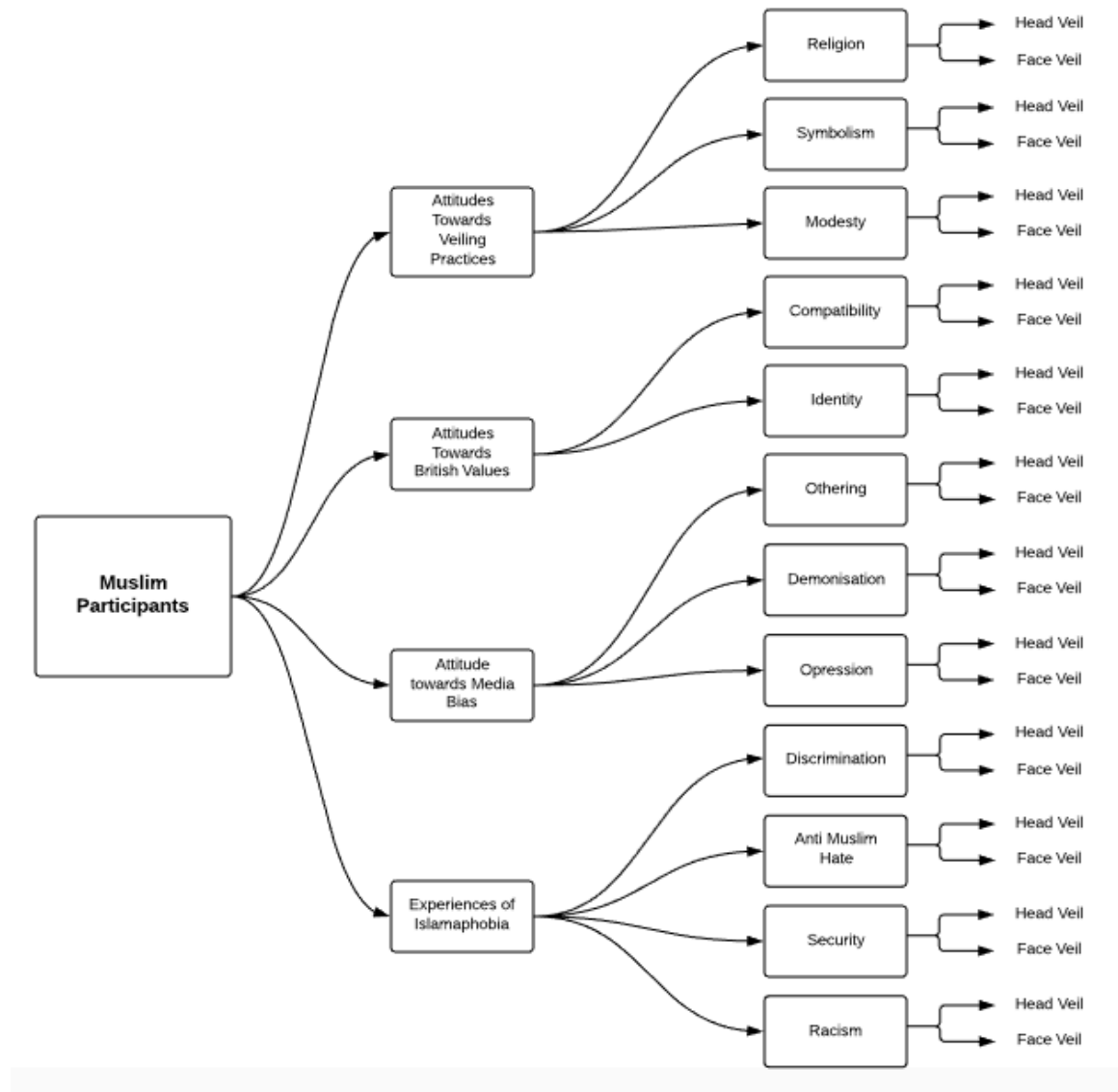
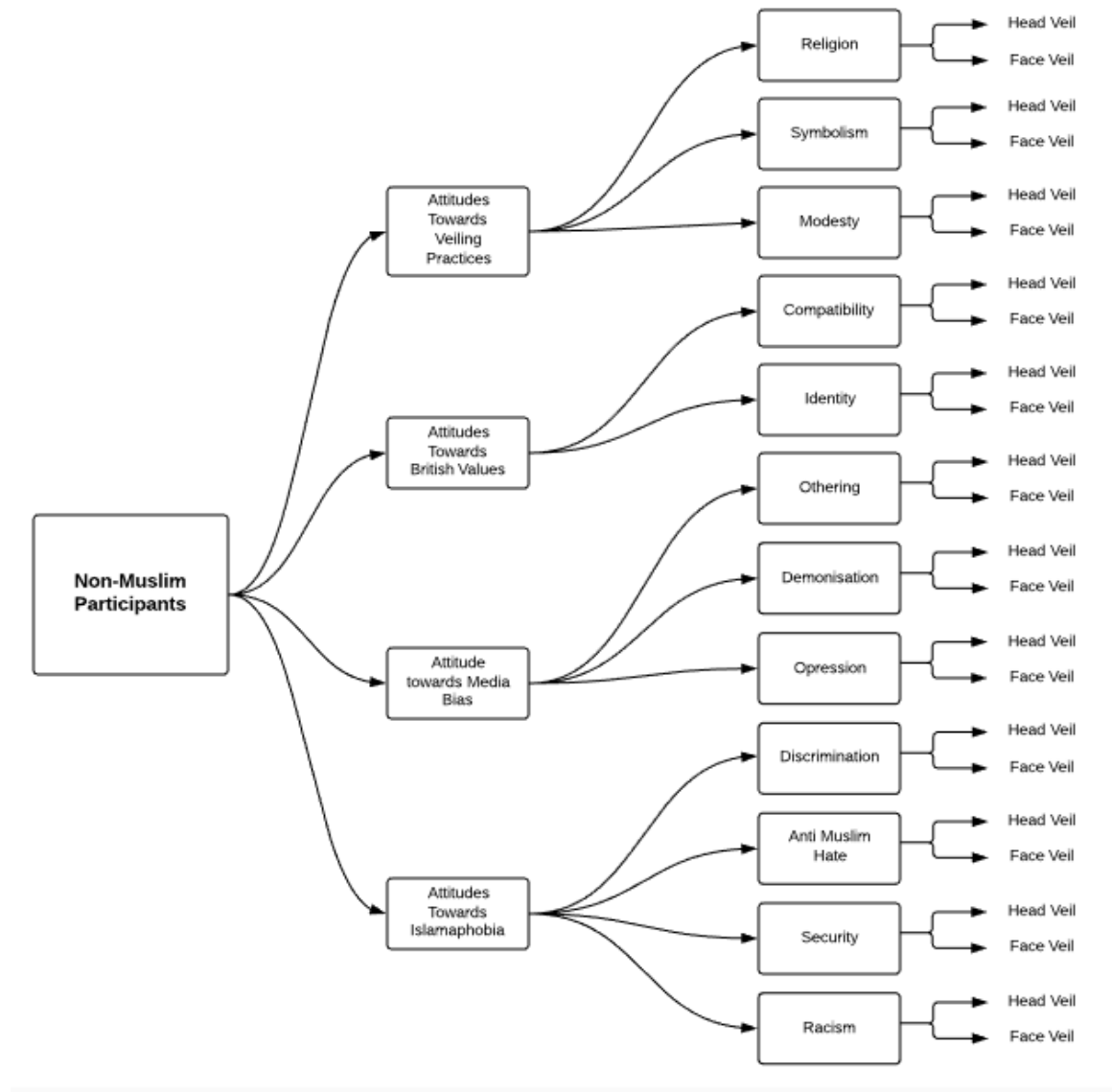


Diagram 2:

Analytical Framework: Non-Muslim Participants



Applying the analytical framework

Identifying sections of data that correspond to particular themes is called indexing (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Using the analytical framework, the 'indexed' data was charted into themes and sub-themes to report the research findings.

Charting data into the framework

Charting referred to summarising the data by categories from each transcript. For example, each indexed entry is transferred to a new document that refers to a specific theme, such as 'social change' (Ramlaul, 2010). Gail et al (2013) suggest the need to strike a balance between reducing data and retaining the feelings and meanings of the participants involved. (See appendix 8)

Interpretation of the data

The final stage involves analysis of key data characteristics using charts created to record the nature of event or phenomena to find links, provide explanations and develop strategies (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Such interpretation of data provides a true reflection of participant's attitudes, beliefs, feelings and values (Srivastava & Thompson, 2009). For this present study, I used an analytical memo that was structured with sub-headings, a definition of the category, codes emerging from it, opposing views and points for consideration and comparison (Gale et al. 2013). Bullet points and bold and italic fonts were used to illustrate patterns and characteristics of, and differences between, data identified (see appendix 9). Subsequent memos were repeated for all sub-themes under each category to create a narrative for the findings chapter.

Triangulation

In social research, the term triangulation involves using multiple methods to avoid problems with bias and validity (Blaikie, 2007; Denscombe 2007). Borrowed from a quantitative context of surveying and evaluated research, triangulation is used among qualitative researchers to compare two or more different views of the same phenomenon (Coolican, 2004). The outcomes of the focus group interviews were triangulated with the semi-structured interviews completed by both Muslim and non-Muslim women. Despite triangulation aiming to increase reliability through comparing data to decide if it corroborates or validates the findings (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002), Richie and Lewis (2003) suggest that triangulation provides a fuller picture of the phenomena, but not necessarily a more accurate one.

In this present study, triangulation would provide a broader insight into discrimination faced by Muslim women who veil. By utilising multiple data sources such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews and recruiting multiple samples such as Muslim and non-Muslim participants, provided multiple perspectives

Chapter 4 - Findings

Muslim women

Attitudes towards veiling

Religious purposes

The first section of the interviews asked the participants about veiling practices. Of the 21 Muslim women involved in the focus groups and individual interviews, 16 wore only the head veil, while the remainder wore both the head and face covering. The majority of the participants believed the decision to cover their head fulfilled their religious duties:

I think that if I cover I am fulfilling my duty as a good Muslim this is why God will protect me always (INT2, Nadia)

Religious reasons and personal choice, I reverted to Islam so covering my head was compulsory (INT5 Samina)

Many participants chose to make the transition from the head veil to the face veil when striving for a higher level of religiousness. Interview participants Tanwi and Firoozeh began adorning the face veil as a consequence of their in-depth studies of Islam. While another participant described religion and in turn the head veil as a coping mechanism when her elder brother was diagnosed with cancer:

Religious and personal reasons, my elder brother had cancer. I began questioning my religion so began praying and covering my head helped me cope (INT6, Qaisra)

Symbolism

It is also clear from the responses that not only is the hijab viewed as a religious requirement but also symbolises added an air of respectability. Laila from the focus group associated a high moral standard of behaviour with the head and face veil and made sure she covered her head in front of older people as a mark of respect. While

other participants suggested they were paying due respects to their religion and the teachings of the prophet.

Modesty

For many participants the veil represented Modesty, conforming alongside the idea of wearing clothing that did not show off the shape of the body. Both Amani and Ausma commented on the veil being about 'dressing modestly and respectfully'. Ausma describes what specifically what modesty meant to her:

Well, I make sure my bum is covered (laughs). And my clothes are loose so the shape of my body cannot be seen. I kind of mix eastern and western outfits. (INT1Ausma).

In a similar vein, Samina stated that she wore only 'loose-fitting clothing or if her clothes were fitted, then she would adorn the 'jubbah', a full-body covering. The idea of including clothing as a part of the veil to cover the body was repeated by many of the Muslim participants. Nadia from the second interview was also a keen observer of 'modesty'. Alongside adorning the head veil, she wore knee-length skirts with jeans or loose-fitting trousers and a loose-fitting top. One participant pointed out how modesty was not being adhered to correctly:

Hijab is about covering your whole body not just your hair. These days they have their chests out and bums sticking out in skin-tight jeans (INT8, Benazir)

Protection

Some women added a further dimension to the head veil, viewing it as protecting themselves from harm.

For me personally it [hijab] is safety and respect... I think that if I cover I am fulfilling my duty as a good Muslim this is why God will protect me always (INT2, Nadia)

My religion says I should, and other men [do] not see me out of my house so covering important to protect me (FG2, Zakiyah).

Islamic values

While the participants displayed how the head veil represented their Islamic values such as modesty and worship to God, some ambiguity arose around wearing the face veil.

With many participants disagreeing it was a religious requirement or whether it was indeed a practical garment to adorn:

I do not feel it is right when we go Makkah we not cover face so why cover here? (FG2, Zakiyah)

Yes niqab not good in bank or interview people should see face (FG2, Naima)

I feel the niqab has no place in British society. (INT5Samina)

Participants Maheera, Tanwi, Firoozeh, Rizwana and Najma who did adorn the face veil all felt it was their religious duty to do so.

Fashion

For some of the younger participants experimenting with different styles of head veil provided a means to engage with the latest fashion trends. Selina from the focus group observed how times were changing for Muslim women who veil. From struggling to find something other than 'black scarf and black veil' to a variety of Islamic fashion on offer so she can 'cover and look good'. Other participants described styling the head veil as a 'fashion accessory' (FG2, Naima) and more accepted at work 'if it looks good' (FG1, Ayisha). Ausma commented on how covering the hair may be initially a difficult commitment to stick to, however:

Making it look pretty or matching it with your outfit can make it easier to be trendy and modest (INT1Ausma).

Another participant felt 'wearing hijab fashionably is better than not wearing it at all' despite also noting that Islam and fashion were a 'contradiction'. Likewise, older participants appeared to be more critical of styling hijabs, with some suggesting the new style of head veil had nothing to do with Islam:

Religiously the term hijab means to cover modestly your head, shoulders and chest. That includes no tight clothes or makeup to make you look attractive... hijab and fashion? No, I don't agree with it (INT5Samina)

Islamic Identity

Hijab was also an important symbol of identification for many of the Muslim participants as indicated in the following extracts:

For me, it is all about my identity and to live modestly. Its freedom of choice and I wouldn't change for anyone (INT1Ausma).

It's a part of my identity, I'm Muslim and I want to show that I'm proud. It's now a part of my clothing, I wouldn't go anywhere without it. (INT3, Tanwi)

It's a part of my Muslim identity. (INT5Samina)

My identity, modesty and peace (INT7, Maheera)

British values and the compatibility of the veil

17 of the 21 participants described themselves as 'British' Muslims, and most of the women felt the head veil was compatible with British values, but not the face veil. However, the term 'British values' was often viewed as ambiguous. While some participants were confident when articulating what the term meant for them, others (especially those for whom English was not a first language) professed to not understanding the term. Centred on the notion of British values, some Muslim participants pointed out similarities between British values and Islamic values, and thus the ease at relating to the former.

Yes, I don't feel like an outcast from British society. The UK is a multicultural society. My headscarf does not impact British values, actually I think it reflects my Islamic values as well as British (INT1, Ausma)

Yes definitely compatible. When I go to meetings, they all talk to me, we all interact together. I was born and bred here so I would describe myself as a British Muslim. We enjoy going out for meals, going to the pictures and stuff just like what the non-Muslims do, the only difference being is we don't drink or eat pork.... with the face veil, if you live in an area where there are many Muslims, you will fit in. But in a predominately white area, you will stand out. At work, you will struggle too, so I don't think it is compatible (FG1, Sara)

Yes, I think it is, I still have a role in society even if I cover my head...I would say I am a British Muslim. Islam also same values... Face veil no compatible, even some Muslims don't like it (INT6, Qaisra)

British identity

Of the four who didn't identify as 'British', two were not British citizens and two were unsure whether they would feel comfortable describing themselves as British.

I won't class myself British, I am Hungarian Muslim. (INT2,Nadia)

Maybe culturally it is not compatible, but I must follow the rule of God, I don't think English people like it. Its different isn't it, so makes people stand out...I think [the] majority do not like it (INT2, Nadia)

I don't care what people think it is Allah's command, what are British values? I am from Bangladesh, I don't think I can be British (FG2, Asmaa)

Yes doesn't matter what people think, I am only bothered about [being] Muslim. (FG2, Zakiyah)

Media bias

All the participants rejecting the notion of the head or face veil was oppressive. They were then quite disturbed by the role media played in the 'demonisation' of Muslims based on what they wore. Many participants felt the media tended to portray negative and stereotypical images of Muslim women who veiled and as a result made situations worse for them:

We are made out to be some backwards religion that forces women to cover. It just enforces negative stereotypes, like Muslim men 'force' their women to cover. Women are uneducated and they don't integrate. So many people believe this because of the media (INT1Ausma)

I blame the media for the witch-hunt against and demonization of Muslims. It's like they don't want us to integrate. They want us to be different like so they can say look we helped these poor innocent Muslim women escape the hijab or niqab.... think in the current climate it's ok to make Islamophobic comments. I feel the media and the government have allowed this to continue (INT5, Samina)

Oh, media definitely making things worse for us. People don't research themselves and only believe what is on [the] news. People should learn about Muslims themselves do some research (INT2, Nadia)

Several other participants spoke of the 'bias' against Muslims in mainstream media. During her interview, Tanwi was frustrated how in her opinion, the BBC 'lied about everything' because they 'hated Muslims' so their coverage was 'biased' and 'out of context'. Furthermore, the use of the word 'terrorist' was used disproportionately according to some participants:

Media makes out like all Muslims support ISIS so anything they do, we are to blame, but everything they do goes against what Muslims believe (INT3, Tanwi)

Experiences of Islamophobia

Participant responses when questioned on experiences of Islamophobia revealed how discriminatory behaviour culminated in Muslim women feeling isolated and alienated. 'Dirty looks', 'mutterings under the breath', abuse hurled from over the street and being spoken to in a 'patronising manner' as if they did not understand English or were 'unintelligent' were many of the occurrences the participants spoke of. Qaisra spoke about the time her elderly mother was due to be admitted to hospital. According to Qaisra, she waited unreasonably long for her mother to be given a bed, while others who came after were admitted sooner. When she asked what was causing the delay, Qaisra felt she was constantly ignored. Another experience of Islamophobia Qaisra recounts was during a trip into town. Qaisra describes feeling so frightened after she became the victim of anti-Muslim (verbal) abuse from a non-Muslim White man. The incident left Qaisra so traumatised she did not go back into town for two years.

Conversely, Nadia, a White Hungarian revert stated how she was 'treated with even more respect' after deciding to adorn the veil, by both Muslim and non-Muslims.

'Backlash' against Muslims

Many participants explained how the situation significantly worsened following 'terrorist' attacks carried out by individuals who identified as Muslims:

It's much worse now. After 9/11 it was bad, but recently since the Manchester attacks or the attacks in London, it's not about if, it's about when. Very scary! (FG1, Rizwana)

Everyone treated her differently they wouldn't speak to her and made her feel really bad like it was her fault. She hated going in, felt so intimidated (INT1, Ausma)

Anti-Muslim hate

Some participants perceived the 'anti-Muslim hate' through the lens of ignorance. Zakiyah from the second focus group eloquently suggested that it was not the fault of the 'goray (White people) for hating us', rather she blamed a lack of Islamic understanding for the dislike. In a similar vein, others attributed anti-Muslim hate towards Muslim women who veil, in particular, those who cover their face, as a lack of understanding as well as a fear of Muslims. While some disagreed with the idea that increased knowledge

of Islam and Muslims would in some way improve the situations for Muslims or Muslim women:

If someone wants to interact they do whether [the] face is covered or not. Ignorant people who hate won't interact whether I cover my face or don't cover anything (INT3, Tanwi)

Security

Most of the participants spoke of the constant security issues they felt both for themselves and other Muslim women who wore head and/or face veils. Anxiety often manifested as excessive fear and worry, coupled with feelings of tension and hyper-vigilance:

I wear face veil and I am scared, sisters like me are always afraid someone will try and pull our veil off (FG2, Najma)

Recent acid attacks make me feel anxious...Yes, I am scared, there's all this hate against Muslims, wearing a hijab makes you stand out to these haters. But then again the niqab causes more safety issues (INT1, Ausma)

I have security issues I am afraid that I will be attacked because I cover my face. I know so many women who have been confronted by angry White men (FG1, Rizwana)

A small number of participants felt that it was safer to remove the veil. Firoozeh in her interview explained how she felt safer in the past when she was living in Italy and she didn't veil. Firoozeh felt that the UK 'was the worst for security issues while Muslim women who veiled', adding she felt afraid for all her 'Muslim sisters'. Yet despite the security issues, the majority of the participants held on to an unwavering belief to practice their religion and continue with their veiling practices:

I still wear it with confidence, but like I feel acid attacks or other physical attacks, like hijabs being pulled off Muslim women have made me more wary about the negative views towards Muslims (INT9, Uzma)

There are security issues, but I will still wear (INT2, Nadia)

Yes I do feel anxious about wearing hijab and afraid, I'm so much more aware now of people around me but not anxious enough to remove it (INT6, Qaisra)

No, nothing has happened to me, but after Manchester attacks, my daughter said she felt very uncomfortable in Manchester, people were staring at them and giving them dirty looks. Like it was them who were a part of the attack. My daughter said she felt afraid for her own safety. (INT8, Benazir)

Some women found their ways of responding to negative experiences. One participant suggested that all Muslim women should walk in groups rather than alone, with Samina suggesting that her approach is to 'smile' and appear 'friendly and approachable'. Furthermore, Samina said she encourages non-Muslims to speak to Muslims to gain more reliable information than from the media.

Racism

Participants felt Islamophobia was a manifestation of racism and xenophobia. With many holding the view that there is an inherent dislike of 'brown and black people' while being Muslim serves to exacerbate the level of discrimination. One example given by a participant was when a White male refused to allow her to be his carer because she reminded him of a 'terrorist', adding he preferred a white worker (Qaisra). Others observed how there was a constant sense of hostility from non-Muslims towards Muslims. Further examples of racism and xenophobia are illustrated in the following responses of the participants:

I've been called a terrorist on the street, even while I'm driving I've had abuse, people shouting 'go home Muslim scum'. It's much worse in the past few months (INT8, Benazir).

In the past, all brown people were p***s and all blacks n****s. These days the racism is still there but its more about the fact that we are Muslim and in the eyes of these people we are terrorists. We are still told to 'go back to our own country...now Muslims are the main target (INT3, Tanwi)

I've been called a p**i, towel head, I've even been mistaken for a nun. In the current climate, it's ok to make Islamophobic or racist comments. The media and the government have allowed this to continue (INT5, Samina)

Yes 'goray' [non-Muslim] children always saying things like go back to your country (FG2, Zakiyah)

Regional Islamophobia

As indicated above, Islamophobia and racism have become mutually reinforcing experiences for the participants. At the same time, some participants made a clear reference to area or region, arguing differences exist between Muslim women's experiences depending on where they were located geographically in the UK. One participant (Ausma) explained how her cousin who attended a predominately 'White'

school was made to feel 'uncomfortable' by non-Muslim pupils because she was the only Muslim girl who wore the head veil. Ausma also recounted how the Manchester attack had affected how her Muslim friend was treated on placement in a white area:

Everyone treated her differently they wouldn't speak to her and made her feel really bad, like it was her fault. She hated going in, they even kicked her off placement before the end. (INT1, Ausma)

Other participants reported similar experiences wearing head and face veil in a mainly white area. Ayisha from the first focus group a fashion designer claimed she had no issues of Islamophobia at work but faced harassment while out with her mother who adorns the face veil. There was a similar theme throughout the women's' experiences of Islamophobia mainly in White areas. Creating reluctance in some women to veil. Conversely, the White British convert to Islam stated that despite knowing of other 'sisters' being harassed for veiling she personally had felt safe in the White area she lived in:

Personally, I don't have any issues, I live in a white area and people accept me for who I am. But I know other women who do face issues for covering up (INT5, Samina)

Reporting Islamophobia

One of the key factors that emerged from this discussion is the fact that all but one of the participants reported the incidents of Islamophobic hate crime to the police or victim support organisations because they felt nothing would be done about it. Nadia during her interview explained how she was a part of a close-knit Muslim community that supported each other, especially when it came to anti-Muslim hate crimes. However, she felt that she did not know of anyone reporting an Islamophobic incident to the police. Because they felt nothing would or could be done. This lack of reporting Islamophobic incidents despite experiencing them was a recurring theme throughout the paper.

Non- Muslim women

General attitudes to veiling

The four non-Muslim participants described themselves as White British, who knew of Muslim women who adorned the veil. In reference to attitudes towards head and face veil worn by Muslim women, all four participants viewed the head veil as acceptable in British society as long as it was worn by choice and as an expression of the Muslim faith:

When I see a woman with a head veil, I don't think anything it's just normal... I'm happy I live in a society where people can wear what the like. (INT1 Charlotte)

When the participants were asked what the face veil symbolised for them, all four women perceived it more negatively relative to the head veil. Charlotte explained how she found the idea of covering your face hard to 'process', describing the feeling like an 'internal battle'. Another participant found the face veil 'shocking' and creating 'visible barriers' (INT2, Emily). Jane also had strong feelings with regards to the face veil:

Head veil is fine, but face veil I really don't like that. I'm not sure what the point of it is? (INT3, Jane)

Having then asked the participants to elaborate on their understanding of the face veil, many associated it with oppression, patriarchy and segregation:

Women of the Muslim religion... face veil symbolises a social pressure (INT1, Charlotte)

I think [the] identification of religion... face veil symbolises segregation/ lack of integration (INT2, Emily)

The face veil is about women being oppressed, something that is out of place in any western country disrespectful to other people (INT3, Jane)

Face veil symbolises patriarchy and is rather depressing (INT4, Anne)

During the course of the research, it became clear that the non-Muslim participants were not in favour of the face veil. The distinction between head and face veil became a significant issue for the participants. However, when asked, most upheld the right of Muslim women to adorn both head and face veil, and most also stated they would not support a ban on the head or face veils.

British values and veiling

The debate on the veil merged with the issue of assimilation. The participants' responses suggested that the head veil did not contradict British values and thus was not seen as posing a 'threat' as long as it was worn out of choice. However, when asked the same question concerning the face veil, there was a disparity in the responses, with half of the participants explicitly stating there was a conflict between the face veil and British values. Charlotte stated 'It is the opposite of democracy, and does Muslim women an extreme disservice'. However, an opposing view suggested that respect and tolerance was a British value, and thus if someone chose to cover their face for religious reasons it should be allowed:

No neither conflict with British values, we live in a country where everyone is free to express themselves, but having said that I don't agree with it (INT4, Anne)

While one participant was ambivalent in her response:

Face veil... I don't know, because we should be tolerant, and respect individual choice but I don't feel comfortable with someone whose face I can't see (INT2, Emily)

To further develop an understanding of 'Britishness', participants were asked whether it was possible to integrate a British and Muslim identity. Most of the participants agreed this was possible with the premise that the face was not covered.

Yes for sure, [asks me if I am Muslim] ... like you for example. You have got your self an education, integrated into society perfectly well (INT2, Emily)

Yes definitely, I think it shows in your actions, so you can practice your religion but also agree with British values and respect our way of living too, so that includes seeing people's faces and not hiding behind a veil (INT4, Anne)

However, one participant felt strongly about Muslims having a stronger attachment to their religion and as a result never being fully British or accepting western culture:

I think Muslims only consider themselves Muslim, not British and the ones who wear face veil are anything but British (INT3, Jane)

From the data, it was clear that most of the women felt that despite their dislike for the face veil, forcing a woman to remove an emblem of religious piety raises further issues of another kind of oppression.

Media bias and veiling

Not dissimilar to the Muslim participants' responses, the concept of media bias on account of women whom veil was seen as problematic and playing a role in contributing to the prejudice facing Muslim women who visibly identify as Muslim through their veiling practices. It can be said there was a generalised cautiousness regarding how the media portray Muslims:

Media only make the situation worse, they blame Muslims for everything, I think Muslim women are always in the papers, especially the ones who wear [the] face veil. I don't believe everything I read (INT2, Emily)

I think they [media] probably do exaggerate the situation. But face veil is an important topic and they are right to speak up against those Muslims that wear it (INT3, Jane)

I think media especially the tabloids are notorious for sensationalising news. Media and politicians make it worse for them and us...its like they want us to be afraid of them (INT4, Anne)

Discrimination and Islamophobia

The meaning of the term 'Islamophobia' appeared to be clear to all four participants, who described it as an 'irrational prejudice' (Charlotte,) and 'discrimination targeted at Muslims' (Emily & Jane) with Anne putting it down to ignorance of Islam.

It's quite bad right now [current climate for Muslims] especially after the Manchester attack (INT1, Charlotte)

Yes I imagine they do, I mean I don't think head veil should create barriers, but I can imagine it still does for some very narrow-minded people (INT2, Emily)

In contrast, the face veil was perceived by Charlotte as a 'hindrance to communication and employment, while posing identification issues'. Likewise, Emily questioned the employability of women who covered their face; along with other participants, Emily felt that Muslim women covering their face would mean putting themselves in harm's way because of the 'majority public dislike of the face veil'. Anne articulated the many barriers Muslim women who cover their face could come across:

Covering their face and going into a hospital, or going to court or paying for petrol, they will have to be challenged (INT4, Anne)

When the participants were asked if *they* felt any barriers from women adorning the veil, all participants had strong views with regards to communication issues, such as lack of

face-to-face interaction. Jane felt because the face veil itself was a barrier it created further difficulties:

How do you speak to someone face to face without being able to see his or her face? Creates barriers in the sense that we feel they are different to us. (INT3, Jane)

Anti-Muslim hostility

When asked the perceived reasons for the increase in hate crime against Muslims women who veil, some interviewees drew direct links between incidents of hate crime and the abundance of negative news stories concerning Muslims and Islam. The data suggested that not only did the media provoke and increase feelings of insecurity, suspicion and anxiety amongst non-Muslims; but also that it was a factor in the increased the levels of hate crime against Muslim women. Another element mentioned by two participants was the impact of a rise in far-right groups and the normalisation of racism:

Media is fuelling stereotypes and ignorant people are taking it all in and taking it out on Muslim women who are visibly Muslim. I think the face veil will definitely make the women high-risk targets (INT1, Charlotte)

Media and far-right groups are to blame. Media because of the way they depict Muslims, and even though I don't like the face veil I don't agree with anyone being attacked for wearing it. Far-right groups are becoming more prominent, so racists now feel it's ok to hate on people. I think Brexit has probably made things worse for a lot of people (INT2, Emily)

Media will have a huge part to play, groups like BNP are to blame for sure, they fuel hate. I think Brexit will have had an impact too, I've heard people make so many racist remarks and no one seems to be bothered. It's shocking! Makes me think what kind of country Britain has become (INT4, Anne)

However, one participant felt it was down to 'lack of integration' by the Muslims and lack of government action against Muslim women who adorned the face veil, which led to frustration amongst the general public (INT3, Jane).

Security

The probable explanation given by the participants for the increased security issues faced by Muslim women was the degree to which they visually identified as Muslims, with the major determinant according to the participants identified as the face veil.

I feel sad that people's thoughts are going backwards and women are being attacked for veiling. I think that if you cover your face with a mask-like a veil you will attract unwanted attention (INT1, Charlotte)

Yes, I think they are much more unsafe now if they veil, especially the face covering. I think Muslims have it quite bad right now (INT2, Emily)

Yeah, I think they are more at risk especially if they cover their face, people just don't like it. It's the government's fault they should ban it (INT3, Jane)

I think yes they are. Muslims are blamed for everything these days, and sadly women are easy targets. Mostly I read about attacks on women who cover their face seems so common these days (INT4, Anne)

According to data from the Interviews it was clear the women viewed the face veil as the 'other' and as a threat to society. Furthermore, the participants' significant importance to face-to-face communication appears to be a perceived barrier to assimilation.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Muslim women's attitudes

Religion

Starting from the premise that for British Muslim women the veil is a powerful marker of difference, this study aimed to first understand the reasons for veiling. The Muslim women in this study differed in their ethnic and cultural background from one another. However, the central concept emerging from the Muslim focus groups and questionnaires highlighted a religious obligation rather than a cultural one. Rassool (2014) proposes that religion and culture are practically synonymous in many parts of the world.

Modesty also has an authoritative religious justification in the Qur'an, which contains references to women's dress and thus is open to interpretation and the subject of much debate amongst Islamic scholars (Tarlo, 2010). Of the passages in the Qur'an that do refer to women's clothing, the passages address issues around modesty and sexual decorum, as well as concerns around covering for protection (Tarlo, 2010).

Symbolism and modesty

The symbol of a woman wearing a head veil in the Western culture went from a symbol of respect and admiration to a symbol of oppression (Zeiger, 2008, in Heath, 2008). Despite being practised by Christian, Jewish and Muslim women, the symbol of the 'veil' continues to be associated mainly with Islam and Muslims (Amer, 2014). Yet religion is not the only factor that describes whether or how a Muslim woman veils. The participants' responses for the practice of wearing the head veil was diverse. For example, after religion, many Muslim women constructed the veil as a symbol of self-respect, which intersected with their understandings of what they believed to be modest dress in Islam.

In any discussion concerning the head veil, consideration must be given to the context in which it is worn. Some participants stated they adorned the head veil out of respect for their elders, thus implying social pressures within the home could influence the wearing

or removal of the veil. The role of the head veil can also be perceived as a social responsibility as well as a personal one. Zeiger, (in Heath, 2008) confirms this stance, highlighting how women are required to maintain a particular presence through veiling, which assumes connections between family, honour and respect for social order. Another perspective is that of Williams and Vashi (2007) who suggest for some Muslim women there remains a social pressure to conform to wearing the veil to maintain their public reputation. In contrast to Williams and Vashi's view, this study indicated that the individual woman's choice to don the veil was due to a variety of reasons with no example of women having the veil imposed on them.

Protection

For other participants, there was a strong element of the veil protecting against harm. Supporting this notion of safety, Wing & Smith, (2005) suggest some women wear the head veil as a protection from the male gaze. Gressgard (2006) reports that Muslim women cover up certain parts of the body to avoid the lust of men. According to Ruby (2006), the head veil affords women the ability to guard their reputation, because they are physically able to control what others see of them, and as a result, they are protected from the male gaze. Furthermore, Ruby (2006) claims Muslim women who wear the head veil promote respect and dignity from their peers as well as protection. While the head and /or face veil may be viewed as protection from male gaze or unwanted attention, it is contradicting this very notion of safety because as research has highlighted, women adorning head and in particular face veil are at more risk of Islamophobic attacks (Allen and Nielson, 2002; Afshar, Aitken & Franks, 2005; Chakraborti and Zempi 2012; Tarlo, 2007).

Fashion

Some of the younger participants revealed how they wished to veil both fashionably and within the Islamic constraints. Often communicating their fashion sense by how it is draped. A young participant described her personal experience of expressing both her feelings of identity to British culture and her desire to express and uphold her religious faith. Dwyer's (1999) research into British fashion examined how hybrid identities were formed that challenged 'Muslimness' and 'Asianess' encountered mainly within the family space. This did not seem to resonate with some of the older participants who seemed unable to validate the association between veiling and fashion, believing it to be

a contradiction with Islamic values. The notion of integrating faith with fashion is criticised from both conservative segments of the Muslim community as well as from the secularists (Amer, 2014). For example, some academics scholars believe a woman should hide her beauty when she is outside of the home (Dunkel, Davidson & Qurashi, 2010).

Identity

The stereotype of Muslims assuming a religious identity above all else fails to give a true impression of the variable ways in which Muslims practise and conceive the relationships between religion, politics, culture and society (Staeheli, Mitchell & Nagel, 2009). Macleod's important (1991) study on the veil in Egypt highlighted veiling practices as being multi-layered and representing many dichotomies, including modern and traditional, religious and cultural and public and private. In the British context, the wearing of the head veil is viewed by non-Muslims as an expression of ethnic identity, as well as religious identity (Dwyer, 1999). One such notion that resonated with the participants was the association between wearing the veil and protection of their Muslim identity. Wagner et al. (2012) suggest the veil is a social experience and can be a means of asserting identity and resistance. Furthermore, in his research on French Muslim women, Croucher (2008) found that to Muslims the Islamic veil and head veil were a fundamental part of their identity. Rather than hide or downplay their religious identity that is stigmatised by others, most of the women in this study chose to openly show their religious affiliation through their head veil and/or face veil. Despite the consequences associated with the 'discredited' stigma of belonging to the group of visibly religious Muslims.

Attitudes towards face veil

In this study, it appeared that the face veil was still a minority Muslim's dress with only one-quarter of the participants adorning both head and face veil. All stated the reasons as religious. As one of the participants suggested, the transition of the head veil to covering her face was after studying Islam. However, despite the consensus between the participants on the face veil being part of an Islamic identity, there is disagreement amongst many Islamic scholars. Some reject or discourage it (Darsh, 2003; Alibhai-Brown, 2014), some feel it is a recommendation (Bari, 2007; Amer, 2014) and others assert it is a required form of modest dress (Roald, 1994). It is generally acknowledged that no obligation to cover the face can be derived from the Quran (Ipgrave, 2007).

Similar ambiguity was demonstrated amongst the non-wearers of the face veil. Some participants substantiated their criticism of the face veil by pointing out that face veil is not obligatory in Islam and is forbidden during the pilgrimage of Mecca, while others asserted how it created communication barriers. While discussing the practice of face covering, one participant made an interesting point about 'Muslim revert sisters' who contradicted majority Muslim views and often wore the full-face veil. Piela's (2015) research on women who wear the face veil found similar patterns amongst female Muslim 'reverts' whom, perhaps as newcomers to the religion, go above and beyond the norm of religious requirement and adorn the face veil.

One main concern that was picked up on by a majority the Muslim women (whether they adorned face veil or not) were the issues around security and safety of Muslim women who did. Most women associated wearing the full-face veil with heightened vulnerability. This is also recognised by many authors who agree that Muslim women who veil become easy targets for Islamophobic attacks through their visual identifiers (veil) (Allen and Nielson, 2002; Afshar, Aitken & Franks, 2005; Chakraborti and Zempi 2012; Tarlo, 2007). Similarly, Spalek (2002) suggested an increase in feelings of threat and insecurity experienced by Muslim women who veil. Developing this line further, Chakraborti and Zempi (2014) noted how women were downplaying their 'Muslimness' by removing their veil in an attempt to become less visible and thus less vulnerable. Yet despite the powerful rhetoric of the face veil, all Muslim participants in the present study rejected the notion of the face veil symbolising oppression.

Ambiguity around the concept of British values

Jacobson (1997) and Vadher and Barrett (2009) argue that 'Britishness' as a term has several interpretations and 'boundaries' that defining Britishness may be difficult for individuals. Similarly, some participants struggled to define their understanding of British values, with some people in their responses confusing them with 'human rights', such as freedom of expression and freedom of speech. While others expressed their enjoyment of familiar everyday 'British' lifestyle activities that demonstrate their 'Britishness':

According to the Government, British values include 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance' (DfE, 2014). Despite the initial ambiguity with what is meant by 'British values', the majority of the Muslim participants affirmed their religious identity with an affiliation to Britain, describing themselves as

British Muslims rather than identifying with their ethnicity or their parents' ethnicity. Authors who have researched Muslim identities such as Mythen, Walkgate and Khan (2009), and Thomas and Sanderson (2011), suggest that young Muslims can observe an Islamic lifestyle alongside a British identity, given that 'Britishness' is identified as multicultural (Thomas and Sanderson, 2011). Franceschelli (2016) examined the identity among South Asian Muslim families, suggesting there is a crossing of boundaries including religion and culture when conceptualising the notion of Britishness and British Muslims. One focus group participant suggested how integration was dependent on non-Muslims accepting that all Muslims were not terrorists. These sentiments of Muslims, Britishness and integration were also echoed after the 7/7 bombings in London whereby the perpetrators were all British born (Field, 2007; Kabir, 2012).

An alternative interpretation of 'Britishness' provided by Jackson (2016) reconstitutes British values by dividing them into separate discourses. The first is of integration aimed at Muslims, whereby assimilation becomes a disciplinary process; thereby British Muslims must integrate with British values. The second discourse of tolerance is pitched at non-Muslims, who are encouraged to be more tolerant and accepting. However, if Muslims fail to integrate as directed, 'intolerance' by non-Muslims is justified and legitimised (Jackson, 2016). Such emphasis on 'Muslims' difference as opposed to 'non-Muslims' tolerance, places the onus on the Muslims to change rather than non-Muslims to accept (Kundani, 2007). With Tufail (2015) suggesting Muslims are expected by the indigenous British public to assume a British identity over all others.

British values and the head veil

The concept of 'Britishness' and the practice of adorning the head veil, was generally viewed as compatible by the Muslim participants. In the present study, the head veil was an important identity marker and for some of the participants, it provided the basis of being integration.

For one of the participants, the right to wear the head veil was what made her feel British and if that right was removed she would have no choice but to leave her home and country. Mancini (2012) observed how 'once Muslim culture is constructed as incompatible with Western values, Muslims could only choose either to assimilate, by

renouncing their (inferior) culture including its visible symbols, such as the veil, or could leave Britain.'

British values and the face veil

In Britain, Muslim women can still wear the face veil almost anywhere (Zempi, 2016). However, the face veil continues to create more headlines and controversial discussions within political and social spheres (Shirazi and Mishra, 2010). As evident from the discussion so far, surprisingly the majority of the Muslim participants oppose the notion of covering one's face and believe it is not compatible with British values. There is growing pressure for Britain to follow in the footsteps of some European countries and ban the face veil (Sharma, 2016; Veikkola, 2017). Perlez (2007) in her article on Muslim veils and tolerance illustrates numerous example of disputes over the face veil. These include a lawyer who was told she could not represent her client if she covered her face and a teacher who was dismissed from her school for wearing a face veil (Perlez, 2007). Furthermore, Perlez (2007) points out that British educational authorities may propose a ban on the veil in schools.

The association between Muslim women and the face veil is also perpetuated by politicians, for example in 2006, the Home Secretary Jack Straw wrote an article in his local newspaper suggesting the face veil was a visible marker of difference and gender oppression (Kabir, 2012; Rashid, 2016). Straw's controversial comments triggered debate across the British media, with some tabloids calling for the face veil to be removed or banned outright (Moore, 2014; Pearson, 2014). Soon after, many other politicians followed suit with disparaging remarks about the face veil including the (then) prime minister, Tony Blair, calling the face veil 'a marker of separation' (Kabir, 2010; Rashid, 2016). Ahmad (2011) asserts the face veil is viewed as a hindrance to interaction in society and unlike the head veil, the face veil is not a religious requirement. Knott, Poole and Taira (2013) suggest that any behaviour that seems to contradict British values is deemed extreme and a threat. An integrationist discourse then prevails, which questions Muslim integration (Rashid,2016; Saeed,2016).

British values and Islamic values

While discussing British values, the participants did not just recognise their British identity but also embraced it with their religious affiliation. The response from the participants suggests that Islamic values support rather than conflict with British values. This conflicts with Hardy' (2002) and Caldwell's (2010) claims that both sets of values cannot assimilate. Academics such as Modood (2005) and Abbas (2007), argue highlighting a difference between Islamic and Western cultures is done to propagate that Muslims do not integrate with British values.

Media bias and veiling

There has been an increase in media and political questioning of British Muslim identities, with a particular focus on visually observant Muslims who adorn Islamic dress (Shazadi et al. 2017). Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in reporting about Islam in the media focussing mainly on references of extremism and terrorism (Knott, Poole, Taira, 2013). Furthermore, Poole (2002) asserts British Muslims are the central framework for covering Muslims in the UK. Rather than providing any historical or political context, any act of extremism is linked to Islamic belief and practice, with an emphasis on these perpetrators' 'Muslimness' (Knott, Poole and Taira, 2008).

Poole (2002), for example, after studying the role of the British media in spreading negative images on Islam and Muslims, concluded that the media 'overwhelmingly generalised about these groups.' Islam is being viewed by many non-Muslims as an out-dated religion and a threat to British society also resonated in many of the Muslim participant responses. With some participants stated that they had grown so accustomed to the media creating stereotypes of Muslims and opinions on them that they stopped watching and believing mainstream news channels.

As this discussion illustrates, often Islam or Muslims are not portrayed in a good light within Western society and media. This became more apparent to me during my literature review. Muslim women's rights and dress code were in just as much of the

'media' spotlight as topics such as Islamophobia, terrorism and radicalisation. McDonald (2006) suggests the British medias' obsession with the British Muslim population increased in the wake of terrorist attacks such as 9/11, 7/7 and the Glasgow airport attack. According to McDonald, one feature that characterises emerging media discourses on the British Muslim population is how this population is reduced to a homogenous group of people, increasingly associated with terrorism. A major theme brought up by the participants is also a key discourse on veiling reported in the media is that Muslim women are oppressed.

In addition to symbolising Muslim women as victims of patriarchy and misogyny, separateness and self-segregation of the Muslim community concerning veiling is seen as particularly problematic (Rashid, 2016). McDonald (2006) observes how many non-Muslims consider the veil as a universal symbol of women's oppression within a patriarchal religious culture. In her critique of the National Geographic's article on the 'Afghan Girl', Zeiger (2008) reasserted this notion of the West treating the veil as a 'prison' and women as oppressed victims of religion and patriarchy. Contrary to the dominant discourse of the veil as a symbol of oppression, Dunkel et al (2010), addresses issues of oppression, suggesting rather than being forced to veil by men, the veil is a religious requirement that helps maintain identity and respect. The argument that head and face veils go against gender equality and therefore against one of the fundamental values of Western states, is a common critique, widely used not only by politicians but also by the media to defend bans on the head and face veils (Burchill, 2008; Howard, 2012). However, articles with a positive discourse on Muslims have been found in newspapers like the Yorkshire Evening Post, where the local demographics have impacted the news coverage and has encouraged coverage of issues such as discrimination and stereotyping of Muslim women who veil (Knott, Poole and Taira, 2008).

Media bias and face veil

Media reports on young Muslim women in Europe indicated that wearing the *niqab* or face veil was as an act of rebellion in the form of personal, political and religious identity (Perlez, 2007; Shirazi & Mishra, 2010). Furthermore, Droogsma (2007) suggests that the media ascribed negative connotations to the face veil often describing it as the 'enemy'. The issue of banning of religious symbols in public, including the face veil, was highly publicised in the British media and was highlighted further when France banned religious

symbols completely from public places on February 2004 (Droogsma, 2007). The most common argument in promoting the ban on face coverings was the need to promote gender equality and fight the oppression of women who are forced to wear the veil (Droogsma, 2007). A common consensus amongst the academics on the debate surrounding the issue of the face veil ban is the belief that the bans are specifically meant to target the Muslim headscarves and veils (Howard 2012; Nanwani 2011; Idriss 2016). Howard (2012) suggests face veils are 'strongly opposed as they are seen as particularly oppressive.'

In 2013, negative images of Islam were portrayed in the media after reports of a young woman in England who was told she could not testify in court unless she removed her face veil (Murray, 2014). In the end, the court came to a compromise whereby she sat behind a screen and removed her veil so that only the judge, lawyers and jurors could see her (Abelkader, 2014). This arrangement appeared to some as an expression of religious freedom, but to others as 'another move by Muslims to impose their faith on the British legal system' (Murphy, 2014).

The notion of 'othering'

Choudary (2007) argues that despite young Muslims having a strong connection with their British identity, they feel that they are treated as the 'other'. Garner and Selod (2014) describe this process of 'othering' as non-Muslims denying Muslims the same rights and privileges as they enjoy. Said (1978) in his prominent work on Orientalism also picked up on the notion of othering, which he believed was achieved through the construction of dichotomies where the West became the saviour of the uncivilised 'other' (Said, 1978). Sawicki (1991) in her book 'Disciplining Foucault', Foucault's perception of 'reality' is not governed by 'truth' but ordered by external and discursive structures. Expanding on this idea, Foucault contends that the world is controlled by discourse and linguistic descriptions of it.

Chakraborty and Zempi (2012) suggest the veil has become a symbol of the inherent and indisputable practice of 'othering' of Muslim women. Brown (2001) reports that Muslim identities have been constructed as 'other' to Western identities in an attempt to suppress their religious identity. However, Lawler (2008) proposes 'othering' has the opposite effect by sparking a stronger affiliation to one's identity, manifest in an increase in Muslim women adorning the face veil as a protest against society, politics and the

media. Resonating this, Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) observed how the veil was symbolically changed from being a visible symbol of religious identity to one that represents fundamental difference and Otherness. The process of 'othering' was also touched upon in many Muslim responses often relating the process with media bias.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is described as an 'unfounded hostility towards Islam, consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs' (Runnymede, 1997). According to Allen (2012), Islamophobia is an 'all-encompassing term,' which includes anti-Muslim hate crime as well as processes that prejudice and discriminate against Muslims. While Islamophobia is viewed as a relatively new phenomenon, it has roots dating back from the time of the Christian Crusades to the Prophet Mohammed (Allen, 2010). Poole (2002) describes how contemporary manifestations of the Orientalist discourse and constructions of the 'other' have been defined as 'Islamophobia'. Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) report how veiled women often face 'invisible' victimisation of Islamophobia, being neither seen nor heard. Resonating this notion of 'invisibility' was Qaisra, a Muslim participant who felt she and her mother were treated unfairly in a hospital because they were veiled Muslim. Chakraborti and Zempi (2012) suggest Islamophobic incidents targeted at veiled women tended to be a recurrent feature of the victim's everyday lives. With the veil perceived by some as triggering Islamophobia, women adorning the veil to cover head or face are more susceptible to assault (Allen and Nielson 2002). Such Islamophobic victimisation of Muslim women was highlighted in the Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A challenge for us all* (1997), which reported on how attacks on women were a commonplace. Allen (2015), suggest the reason veiled women become easy targets, is that the veil is seen as a symbol of Islam and Muslims that is socially, culturally or politically unwelcome in public spaces.

Experiences of 'backlash'

A report by the Runnymede Trust in 2004, (Stone, 2004) and a report by Choudary (2005) highlighted how Muslims in the UK suggest in the aftermath of 9/11, Muslim women experienced the highest levels of attack and discrimination than ever before. Participants' experiences of Islamophobic hostility also resonated with the findings of

these reports, with some of the participants mentioning the backlash after the Manchester terrorist attacks. This demonstrated how major world events affect not only stereotypes of Muslims but also prejudice towards them (Zempi and Awan, 2016) as well as reinforcing the notion of being treated as the 'Other' (Kabir, 2010).

Alternatively, Hopkins and Patel (2006) suggested the increase in Islamophobia encouraged some Muslim women to reassert their religious identity through wearing head and face veil as a way of retaliating against the rise of Islamophobia. This modification of the veil as a symbol of resistance is perceived as an active and perhaps dangerous feminine identity that must be restrained (Dwyer, 1999). The present study found most of the Muslim women would either begin wearing the head or face veil or continue wearing it, despite the increased levels of threat. Drawing on Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, it can be argued the veil has come to represent a 'stigma symbol' and reinforcing Erikson's (1994) assertion that when security fears are triggered, they could induce people back to adopting their traditional identities. Muslim women are responding to such stigma and backlash of Islamophobia by adopting the veil in an attempt to reverse the stigma and the negative connotations attached to the veil. Instead of turning it into an object of choice and freedom from the social order and norms put in place by the majority population.

Experiences of anti-Muslim hate

In 2007 the Police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), provision services and other agencies that make up the criminal justice systems in England and Wales agreed on a definition for hate crime (GOV.UK 2018). Defined as 'any criminal offence that is perceived by the notion or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic. There are also five centrally monitored strands, including race and ethnicity, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity' (GOV.UK 2018).

Anti-Muslim hate crime is motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon a hatred of Islam (Awan and Zempi, 2014). Many authors agree that in the current climate, Muslims are under an increasing amount of pressure, with a significant increase in anti-Muslim hate crime (Poynting and Mason, 2007; Byers and Jones, 2007; Awan, 2012). Stereotypes of Muslim men as terrorists and fundamentalists and veiled women as oppressed exacerbate anti-Muslim hate crime (Awan, 2012). The organisation, Tell MAMA

(Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), had 548 of 729 incidents reported to them concerned anti-Muslim hate (Tell MAMA, 2014). As well as the visibility of the Muslim identity, gender appears to be another trigger for anti-Muslim hate crime (Awan, 2014). Perry (2014) suggests, that in the case of anti-Muslim hate crime, females are attacked more often, with women who choose to cover their face becoming repeat victims (Zempi & Chakraborti, 2014). This increased risk faced by women who adorn the face veil was reported by both Muslim and non-Muslim participants.

Organisations monitoring anti-Muslim hate and violence report that an increasing number of incidents involve veiled Muslim women (Allen & Isakjee, 2014). Furthermore, when looking at the impact of anti-Muslim hate crime, Iganski (2008) explains how hate crime has a huge bearing on the victims' identity which is central to their notion of 'self'. This was a frequent thread throughout the Muslim discussion, whereby Muslim participants worried about the detrimental effects of hate crime on family members, friends and other Muslim women who veil. This is further highlighted by Spalek (2005) and Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) who suggest Muslim women are forced to view this abuse as an attack on their Muslim identity, which has severe implications for their levels of confidence and feelings of security.

In April (2016) the Home Office began collecting information from the Police on the perceived religion of victims of hate crime. In some cases, perceived religion and actual religion of the victim differs, for example, anti-Muslim graffiti on a Sikh Temple. In 2017/18 where the perceived religion of victims was recorded, 52% of religious hate crime targeted Muslims (2965 offences), with Muslim adults 1.5% more likely to be victims of racially motivated hate crimes as well as religiously motivated (GOV.UK 2018).

Experiences of and attitudes towards security

Spalek (2005) reports an increase in feelings of threat and insecurity experienced by visibly Muslim women, with veiled women not feel safe walking in public spaces (Allen, 2015). This was a frequent concern amongst Muslim women who felt a genuine sense of trepidation, whether they adorned face veil or not. Mythen, Walkgate and Khan (2009) explored the links between victimisation, risky identities and safety for British Pakistani Muslims in the UK. They noted how a substantial fear for their safety, led to strategies of

'identity management' whereby some Muslim women maintained their safety by excluding the veil.

Experiences of and attitudes towards racism

Islamophobia is an all-encompassing term covering many offensive attitudes including racism (Allen, 2012). However, Halliday (2002) notes a distinction must be made between Islamophobia and 'anti-Muslimism', with the nature of the latter more 'alarmist', which encompasses racism and xenophobia. Halliday (2002) also asserts that the focus of 'anti-Muslimism' is on the Muslim rather than the religion, giving rise to a new form of racism which discriminates against both physical and religious traits such as the veil.

Poynting & Noble (2004) found that after 9/11 Muslim women experienced racism more than their male counterparts. Likewise, many participants agreed they had been subject to racism because they visibly identified as Muslim. For instance, the term 'paki' has been a key term of racial hatred for generations (Poynting and Mason, 2007) and is now used to abuse and insult Muslims. According to (Said, 1987) the White majority maintain a positive sense of self; 'we' are everything 'they' are not; good, wise, kind...honest and civilised. Backing this notion of 'White superiority', one participant explained how she was told that her client requested a 'white' support worker because she was not 'good enough' and she reminded him of a 'terrorist'. British Muslims have increasingly become alienated as a result of institutional racism in housing, employment, education, policing and the media (Amin, 2003; Nagel 2002). At a time where there are grave concerns over anti-Semitism (Meer & Noorani, 2008), the type of race relation's legislation to address discrimination against Jews is not extended to Muslims, who are essentially unrecognised in the law, in terms of race (Meer & Modood, 2008).

Non-Muslim attitudes

Veiling

Religion was the most commonly cited reason given for Muslim women to veil by the non-Muslim participants. There was a consensus amongst the participants when they were asked if they felt the head veil was acceptable in British society. However, the notion of veiling as a choice was a recurring theme as illustrated in the following accounts. However, the face veil was much more difficult to for the non-Muslim participants to understand and indeed accept.

Over the duration of the interviews symbolic aspects of oppression, patriarchy and segregation emerged as underlying reasons for the rejection of the face covering. Hence, it was the face veil rather than the head veil that has provoked the most negative attention and debate. However, when asked, most participants upheld the right of Muslim women to adorn both head and face veil and most also stated that they would not support a ban on the head or face veils. The non-Muslims' views on the face veil were similar to the dominant discourse on Western perspectives of the face covering. As Ahmed, (1992) and others suggest, the most common argument from a Western perspective levelled against the face veil is that it is a symbol of oppression and patriarchy and as a reflection of the Islamic world (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnergy, 2013; Yasmeen, 2013). Amer (2014) suggests the symbolic interpretation of the veil as oppressive is because it hides the body as opposed to the Western perception of liberation that displays a woman's body. This corresponds with Prasad's (2012) assertion that the face veil is viewed as alien to Western society and is represented as a 'mask' and an emblem of secrecy and obscurity. It was common to find such constructions by the West of the face veil as a 'mask', Yegenoglu (2003) suggests Orientalist writing describes the 'mask' as hiding the Muslim woman, concealing her true nature and appearing in a false deceptive manner.

Authors such as Levant (2011) and Blatchford (2011), who have written extensively on the face veil, suggest the tradition of [face] veiling is evidence that 'Muslim women are somehow backward or far behind modern, Western times.' Levant (2011) describes the face veil as a 'cage' and a 'symbol of the war against women.' In another article, Levant

asserts his clear disdain towards women who adorn the face veil, by comparing them to dogs; 'It is morally no different than if a man were to walk down the street with his wife wearing a dog collar and a leash'. Not too dissimilar, Blatchford (2011) suggests that the society and culture from where the tradition of veiling comes are still 'tribal, primitive, and misogynist.' Aligned to this notion of 'backwardness', is the assertion that these women, because of their cultures, are oppressed. Consistent with this statement of oppression, the non-Muslim participants described the face veil as 'oppressive', while one described it as 'symbolising patriarchy'. According to Prasad (2012), a false image exists of 'the veiled victim at the mercy of a tyrannical male father or husband.' Conversely, Howard (2012) argues that banning hijabs and full-face veils and other religious symbols 'is as authoritarian and oppressive towards women as forcing them to wear such veils would be.'

British values and veiling

As the findings indicate, non-Muslim participants felt, that in the context of British values the head veil was not viewed as problematic under the premise it is not forced upon the wearer. One striking feature of discussion on the face veil is the vehemence of the feelings expressed both by those who felt it was incompatible with British values and those that felt to oppose the face veil would itself contradict British values:

Integration was a key term used by participants in this present study when they responded to the question of adopting a British identity alongside an Islamic one. Again the face veil was the controversial topic. The debate on whether covering of the face was acceptable while assuming a British identity, positioned itself in support of the dominant discourse on the incompatibility of the face veil. Modood (2005) suggests that 'young Muslims compromise British values due to a strong attachment with their religious values and practices.' According to Zeiger, (2008) the concept of 'veiling' has become associated with everything that is not Western thus 'lifting' the veil has become a metaphor for freedom and democracy.

Media bias

Allen (2012), suggests that the media plays a 'fundamental role in the formulation and establishment of popular views and attitudes in society'. However, and despite the negative media rhetoric on the veil, the picture emerging from the non-Muslim participants was that of a consensus with their Muslim counterparts. All the participants felt the media worsened the situation for Muslim women who veiled by exaggerating the impact of veiling on British society. Many of the non-Muslim women also reiterated themes discussed by Muslim participants such as the lack of trust in the media, oppression, blaming and stereotyping Muslims as well as generating fear amongst non-Muslims.

Sands (2014) suggests Western perspectives of Muslim veiled women have long been viewed through the lens and agenda of Western media and government. Women who veil are often 'reduced' to two simple, binary oppositions. Tarlo (2010) observes how the media portrays the veiled woman as 'submissive, dangerous, oppressed or threatening, yet if she is unveiled she is seen to be 'progressive and integrated into British or European society. Amer (2014) describes the media's obsession with Muslim women's veiling practices as a relatively recent phenomenon, whereby the veil may symbolise perceived threats such as the rise in fundamentalism, risks to national security and Muslim women's subservience to Muslim Men.

This is echoed by Poole (2002) who suggests the coverage of Islam varies depending on its perspective. For example, the Guardian is seen as secular, and thus it highlights freedom of speech and civil liberties while discussing head veil (Poole, 2002). Whereas The Times adopts a Christian position and thus would rather focus on Muslim extremism, in doing so, setting up a 'clash of faiths' discourse. Gillespie (2006), reports how media creates spaces where identity and belonging are continually questioned alongside security, impacting Muslims and non-Muslims differently.

The notion of 'othering'

Media representations often reveal structural inequalities against Muslims, with Muslim women disadvantaged on more than one level (Kabir, 2006). Furthermore, Kabir (2006)

suggests the wider non-Muslim society questions Muslim women's cultural and religious traditions such as the veil. Such examples of 'them and us' (Jenkins 2008) in non-Muslim participant responses was a recurring theme throughout the present research, particularly while discussing the face veil and the impact on communication. However, the notion of 'othering' was recognised as a negative characteristic of the media representation of Muslim women, as highlighted in the above accounts. Metoo and Mirza (2007) suggest the reason wider society are viewing Muslims as 'alien' is because women from an ethnic minority are portrayed as problematic and constructed within a discourse of fear and risk posed by the Muslim 'other'.

Discrimination and Islamophobia

One of the most common themes emerging from the discussion on barriers facing women who adorn the head veil is that it was an identifier of the Muslim faith. As discussed earlier, research backs this claim and suggests that a major factor affecting who is most vulnerable to anti-Muslim abuse may be the degree to which the individual is visibly identified as Muslim (King & Ahmad, 2010). A House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee report on employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK (2016) found that the rhetoric of Islamophobia in the UK was 'damaging and isolating and could contribute to the lack of implementation of proper training and understanding of equality and religious tolerance policies.' This view was echoed by Berthoud and Blekesaune (2007) who conducted a survey based on the British census, and subsequently reporting how Muslim women faced a 'triple penalty' of discrimination that impacted their prospects in employment: their gender, their ethnicity and their religion.

Furthermore, Khattab (2015) and Hopkins & Patel (2006) suggest some women face issues around Islamic dress within the workplace as well as facing pressures from their communities around education. The face veil aroused a degree of antipathy from the participants when they were questioned on the barriers it posed. The face veil was mainly seen as a hindrance to communication and interaction. For instance, participant 'Jane', questions the ability of face to face communication without the face being visible, suggesting the veil creates a 'them' and 'us' feeling, perhaps insinuating the face veil wearer is excluding herself from society and suggesting the non-Muslim is, therefore, not at fault. However, an independent think tank formed to offer research on social cohesion

and Muslims in Britain, suggests rather than hindering interactions, the face veil allows for more meaningful communication, focuses more on the words of the wearer rather than facial expressions and gestures (Grillo & Shah, 2014).

Non-Muslim attitudes towards anti-Muslim hate

Supporting the Muslim participants' view on anti-Muslim hate, the non-Muslim participants compared patterns of abuse against Muslims with racism provoked by the media. Non-Muslim participants also agreed that women who adorned the face veil were at a heightened risk of attack. The participants associated the relationship between anti-Muslim hate with the far right. Copsey et al (2013) suggest this link between the two is relatively understudied. Post 9/11, and especially post 7/7, the Muslim community has been increasingly singled out for attacks by the far-right (Morey & Yaqin, 2011; Awan & Zempi, 2016). The British National Party (BNP) saw British Muslim communities as the 'new enemy', and distributed leaflets entitled 'The Truth about I.S.L.A.M' with I.S.L.A.M an acronym for 'Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson and Molestation of women' (Copsey et al. 2013). According to Modood (2005), such hate-filled and biased material began to distinguish between 'good' South Asians (non-Muslims) and 'bad' South Asians (Muslims). The other major social movement, which is deeply Islamophobic, is the English Defence League (EDL), which is defined by its hostility to Islam (Morey & Yaqin, 2011; Jackson, 2018). In relation to female victims who identified as Muslim, key findings of a report by the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies at Teesside University (Copsey et al. 2013) found that of the reported anti-Muslim offences, 80% were female who wore either the head veil or both head and face veil. Security issues faced by Muslim women whom veil were recognised by some of the non-Muslim participants.

Attitudes towards security

While most participants shared their concerns for the safety of Muslim women who veil, there were some outspoken views on the face veil with some participants, asserting that it impeded integration. One participant likened the face veil to a 'mask', suggesting the wearer has only herself to blame for 'attracting unwanted attention' and becoming an

'easy target'. Once again this echoes Mancini's (2012) observations on how Muslim women have a choice of either assimilating and renouncing the veil, or leaving the society in which they are failing to integrate in. Another participant, Jane, who had been forthright in her negative opinion of the head veil and even more so the face veil, which she felt throughout the discussion was a not 'our' culture, suggested the government should make it an offence to wear the face veil in any public space.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation of the present study is that the small sample size could limit the representativeness of the findings. Secondly, and despite using social media, and distributing posters around the University campus and coffee shops to recruit participants, the study managed to recruit only a small number of women who adorned the face veil. Exploring the experiences of more women who covered with a face veil would have been advantageous to facilitate more refined research, rather than relying on secondary accounts from women who 'knew of' other women who wore the face veil. As a researcher, I felt while my Muslim identity allowed me to connect with the voices and discourses of Muslim women. At the same time, though, I did endeavour to remain impartial and withhold judgment throughout the data collection and analysis. This was particularly difficult while interviewing a non-Muslim participant who held strong views against Muslim women who veil. Additionally, the focus group participants were already acquaintances of each other and therefore a possible bias in the sample, in a way that could have limited the possibility of diverse or opposing opinions.

The locality from where the participants were drawn (North England) and the time I began data collection, coincided with Britain exiting the European Union via the referendum held on 23 June 2016. After the leave campaign won, there was a sharp increase of verbal and physical abuse against Muslims online and on the streets (Azami, 2016), with Muslim women bearing the brunt of the abuse (Tell MAMA, 2016). This would have exacerbated the situation as well as influenced opinion from the perspective of Muslim women who wore head and/or face veil and the views of the non-Muslim participants. Evidence of this can be found in the Findings Chapter whereby Muslim and non-Muslim respondents commented on the impact of media on Islamophobia and the rise of right-wing parties. The timing of this research also coincided with the Manchester Arena attack on

22nd May 2017 which killed 22 people and injured over 500 people when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was detonated during an Ariana Grande concert (Moffic et al 2018). Tell MAMA (2017) in their annual report confirmed a 700% increase in hate crime incidents against Muslims following the Manchester attack. Furthermore, TellMama also reported of several incidents whereby Muslims were publically confronted of either being 'personally or indirectly responsible' (Tell MAMA, 2017).

Despite all the necessary measures taken to avoid any bias from the perspective of the researcher or participants, it was impossible to eradicate the impact of such incidents, especially when the atrocities in Manchester would have been fresh in the participant's minds. This could inadvertently affect the decision to participate in such sensitive research which focussed on the attitudes of Muslim and non-Muslim attitudes, as well as impact participant responses to questions related to Islamophobia.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Islamophobia

The results of this study suggest there has been a rise in Islamophobia-related hate crime, with Muslim women who veil increasingly becoming targets of discrimination. 20 years ago, the Runnymede Trust (1997) published its report, 'Islamophobia; A challenge for us all', which highlighted the consequences of Islamophobia throughout society. The Trust also set practical recommendations for the government, teachers, lawyers, journalists, and religious and community leaders. Since then, the Runnymede Trust (2017) published a 20th-anniversary report, 'Islamophobia; Still a challenge for us all', which provided information on the extent of Islamophobia in Britain 22 years later. Similar to the previous publications, the report found anti-Muslim hate is disproportionately targeting Muslim women, especially those who adorned the veil. There is a need to address many of the issues affecting Muslim women who veil, to improve their wellbeing and tackle issues of discrimination. However, these issues need to be approached more carefully, by both policymakers and the media

Policy responses

Policy responses need to develop and support a wider analysis of discrimination facing Muslim women who veil, with their needs at the forefront of policymaking. The Runnymede report (2017) recommended that local mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners should ensure appropriate resources are allocated to tackling hate crime effectively at a local level. Such as mosques and community centres to support women who have been or fear becoming victims of anti-Muslim hate crime. In addition to criminal justice sanctions for the most serious hate crime offenders, the government should also utilise community-based interventions to tackle hate crime. Furthermore, the European Islamophobia Report (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2015) suggests that workshops should be organised by local government, in which Muslim and non-Muslim communities are brought together so the latter can gain authentic information on Muslims and Islam.

Also, politicians need to avoid stoking up hostility to women who wear the face veil. As was the case in 2006 when Jack Straw, Labour home secretary, asked a constituent to

remove her face veil, saying it would make *him* more comfortable. Describing the face veil as “a visible statement of separation and difference”, Jack Straw suggested that it made relations between the two communities more difficult (Meer, Dwyer & Modood, 2010). More recently, former foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, likened women who adorn the face veil to “pillar boxes” and “bank robbers”. This only serves to “fan the flames of Islamophobia” (Warsi, 2018). Such stereotyping and misleading information on the Muslim veil can be overcome if politicians educated themselves on Islam and Muslims. As Wadia & Joly (2011), in their research with women from Muslim communities stressed, that the words of political leaders and media are based on limited knowledge of Islam, yet often fuel high levels of public hostility and impact negatively on Muslim women and their Islamic dress codes. As a result, Wadia & Joly (2011) recommended that high profile politicians at the national and local level needed to go into the heart of Muslim communities to make contact with ordinary people, to listen and act on their concerns.

As a result of increasing hate crime, the government has vowed to take action. The Home Office published the Hate Crime Action Plan (2016) to reduce hate crime. Amongst its many recommendations, it suggests challenging underlying anti-Muslim attitudes and beliefs starting at a school level.

Increased reporting of anti-Muslim hate crime against women

A key feature of the present study was the lack of reporting of anti-Muslim abuse. Recognising this phenomenon on a larger scale, the Runnymede Report (2017) recommended improving the reporting process of Islamophobic hate crime to challenge Islamophobia. Bayrakli & Hafez, (2015) suggest partnership working between Muslim communities, in particular, Muslim women, and the Government is needed to increase the reporting of hate incidents and crimes. They also suggest workshops educating women on how to counter Islamophobic abuse and discrimination, as well as explaining to them their rights in case they are victims of harassment or discrimination due to their faith. Providing stronger support for victims may work to encourage Muslim women to report Islamophobic hate crime. Organisations representing Muslim women need to be consulted far more widely during the policymaking process to produce policies that have their support and which are therefore more likely to have successful outcomes (Wadia & Joly 2011)

Fairer media responses

The present study found a unanimous agreement that the media played a significant role in the negative portrayal of Muslim women who veil. Aligning with the view of the participants, Allen (2012) suggests the media plays a fundamental role in the formulation and establishment of popular views and attitudes in society and thus can shape and influence public attitudes that could create, feed into and subsequently justify Islamophobic and anti-Muslim attitudes and expressions. Therefore, there is a need to challenge all forms of Islamophobic abuse, including that within the media to improve the lives of Muslim women. Bayrakli and Hafez (2015) recommend the monitoring of media outlets to assess the levels of and ways in which Muslims are demonised. They add that the ethos of the media should be transformed such that rather than oppressing it challenges oppression. The UK government's plan for tackling hate crime (Gov.UK, 2016) recommends that journalists should work alongside the Independent Press Standards Organisation to improve their understanding of Islam and avoid the perils and pitfalls of in their reporting of community issues. There is a need too to empower both Muslim and non-Muslim communities so they can interact and protest when the media try and silence Muslim voices. There should be a particular emphasis on media producers to be made accountable for failing to meet the standards expected of them (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2015).

The 1997 report 'Islamophobia: a challenge for us all' (Conway, 1997), highlighted the extensive media analysis and demonstrated the extent of Islamophobia in the press but its recommendations were largely ignored by the local and central government. The subsequent report by the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (2004), recommended ways in which the media's coverage of Muslims could be improved. These included complaining about and challenging stereotyping or factual errors regarding Muslim coverage in the media. The report also highlighted a need to recruit more journalists from a Muslim background, as well as educating non-Muslim journalists on Islam, British Muslim identities and Islamophobia.

Two decades after the first report on Islamophobia, the Runnymede Trust (2017) published a 20th-anniversary report, 'Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all', to gather together the evidence on Islamophobia in Britain today, and to suggest how to respond to it. The report asserted that the phenomenon of Islamophobia had become more complex

and more embedded in British society. It also made numerous recommendations including how to challenge inaccurate or misleading media content. The report suggested press regulators should investigate the prevalence of Islamophobia, racism and hatred towards Muslims in the media. A focus on accuracy and discrimination emphasised the wider negative effects of individual stories on wider social attitudes (Runnymede Trust, 2017).

From undertaking this research, it is clear the veil (in particular the face veil) is increasingly being seen as a symbol of oppression. Likewise, for Muslim women, Islamophobia increased after terrorist attacks such as 9/11 or 7/7 and more recently the Manchester attack. This research goes some way to suggest that what Blears (2009) posited was indeed correct; 'too much attention is paid to the Muslim woman's appearance, highlighted by the persistent debate on head and face veils, and too little on what they say and do'. Yet the irony is that society suggests we should not judge a book by its cover, only to turn around and judge a Muslim woman by her cover – the veil.

Recommendations for further research

In this study, I have illustrated some of the difficulties faced by Muslim women who adorn the face and, or head veil in the UK, and have given them a platform to voice their opinion and concerns. Listening to these voices and drawing on their experiences is imperative to make real changes concerning Islamophobia, including an improvement in policy and media responses as well as making the process of reporting Islamophobia easier for Muslim women. I have sought to highlight how Muslim women's identities are stigmatised through the media, as well as the lasting impact of increasing levels of anti-Muslim hate in the UK. However, to implement efficient policies, a constructive dialogue needs to include those whose lives are most affected by the veil debates - the Muslim women who wear it.

This study has explored the impact of negative media coverage of Muslims on Muslim women who veil, further studies should focus upon exploring the extent of anti-Muslim incidents involving the use of social media, such is the newness of many of these forms of media that little research has been undertaken to explore its role and impact on Islamophobia. In this study, many Muslim participants expressed how they had no expectations that reporting the abuse would be of any significance, therefore in a way normalising Islamophobia as a part of life. Further research would be needed to

understand the perceived reasons Muslim women are reluctant in reporting experiences of racist violence or discrimination. It would also be useful to research whether Britain leaving the EU would trigger a further surge in Islamophobic hate crime against Muslim women.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Attitudes Towards and Experiences of Muslim Women Wearing Differing Levels of Head and/or Face Veil

FOCUS GROUP: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions to participants

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realise you are busy and I appreciate your time.

Introduction: This focus group discussion is designed to assess your current thoughts and feelings about the head veil (hijab) and the face veil (niqaab). The focus group discussion will take no more than 90 minutes (1.5 hours). There will be a break half way through and refreshments will be provided. A reminder that I will be taping the discussion to facilitate its recollection? (switch on the recorder).

Anonymity: Despite being taped, I would like to assure you that the discussion will be anonymous. The tapes will be kept safely in a locked facility until they are transcribed word for word, then they will be destroyed. The transcribed notes of the focus group will contain no information that would allow individual subjects to be linked to specific statements. You should try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. I and the other focus group participants would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the comments of other group members outside the focus group. If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however please try to answer and be as involved as possible. To maximise confidentiality and anonymity, you are required to choose a pseudonym (fake name) and write this down on the sticky label provided.

Ground rules

- The most important rule is that only one person speaks at a time. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.
- There are no right or wrong answers
- You do not have to speak in any particular order
- When you do have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it is important that I obtain the views of each of you
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group
- Does anyone have any questions? (answers).
- OK, let's begin

Warm up

First, I'd like everyone to introduce myself... my name is Hasina and I will be the moderator today.

Introductory question

I'd like you to tell me what the Muslim veil symbolises for you.

Guiding questions

Attitudes towards veiling

- What are the reasons/ perceived reasons for wearing head/ face veil?
- What are the main issues that affect you about the head/face veil?
- What are others attitudes towards covering of the head/ face? (What do others think/say/do?)
- Is it a positive/negative reaction? If negative, how could it be rectified?
- Does the head/ face veil go against British values and if so how?
- Do you feel comfortable communicating with women who wear head/face veil?

Experiences of veiling

- Do you or anyone you know wear the head/face veil?
- What is the impact of head / face veil on both Muslims and non-Muslims?
- What are your thoughts on the safety of women who choose to wear the head/ face veil?
- What kind of discrimination (if any) do women who adorn the veil experience?

Concluding question

- Of all the things we've discussed today, what would you say are the most important issues that have been raised regarding the head/face veil?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion
- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
- We hope you have found the discussion interesting
- If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please contact my supervisor, his details are on the consent form
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous



Attitudes Towards and Experiences of Muslim Women Wearing Differing Levels of Head and Face Veil

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in this study. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?

As part of my Masters research degree, I am carrying out a study on the attitudes towards and experiences of Muslim women who wear head and/ or face veil. I would like to; 1, hear about the experiences of women who wear the hijab (head veil) and niqaab (face veil). 2, to speak to women who don't wear the veil to know what they think about the head/ face covering.

Why I have been approached?

You have been contacted as you have expressed an interest in taking part in this research.

Do I have to take part?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, but you will be free not to answer any question or to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision not to take part, to withdraw (any time before data analysis) or not to answer any question will not have any effect whatsoever on you or anyone else.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to take part in an interview or focus group. The interview or focus group will last about one hour and it would, with your permission, be audio recorded.

Will my identity be disclosed?

All the information you provide will be treated in confidence and you will not be identified in any way.

What will happen to the information?

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity.

The information will be used for my thesis. It is also anticipated that the research will, at some point, be published in a journal or report.

Your anonymity will be ensured in all of the above publications, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you require any further information about the research, please contact:

Name: Hasina Khan
E-mail: tbc¹

Name: Bernard Gallagher
E-mail: b.gallagher@hud.ac.uk
Telephone: 01484 473158

If you have been affected by any of the issues arising from the research, you can contact the following organisations for support:

Phone

Helpline: 01708 765200 (*hours vary so ring for details*)

Admin: 01708 765222

Email

info@supportline.org.uk

Appendix 3



INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Attitudes Towards, and Experiences of, Muslim Women Wearing Differing Levels of Head and/or Face Veil

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher. Please read each of the statements below and tick the box alongside to show you consent to it.

I confirm that I am over the age of 18	
I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research.	
I consent to taking part in the interview.	
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time (before data analysis) and without giving any reason.	
I agree for my interview to be recorded with an audio device.	
I give permission for my words to be quoted (in written or verbal reports by use of pseudonym).	
I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield	
I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and her supervisor will have access to the information I provide.	
I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in any report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report.	
I understand that this research is conducted under conditions of confidentiality and anonymity, except where I provide information that indicates another person is at a risk of harm, a child is at risk of harm or where the researcher deems that I am at risk and am not able to seek support. Under such situations, this information might have to be shared with an appropriate authority.	

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

<p>Signature of Participant:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Print:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Signature of Researcher:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Print:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>_____</p>
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(One copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Attitudes Towards and Experiences of Muslim Women Wearing Differing Levels of Head and/or Face Veil

Interview Schedule

Administrative details

Date:.....
Location:.....
Start time:.....
Tape recorded:.....

Interviewee' socio-demographic characteristics

Name
Age
Ethnicity
Disability.....
Employment status (emp/unemp)
Job (if employed)
Type of accommodation (e.g. housing/ privately rented/owned...house/flat)....
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Area of residence (specify part of town / village).....
Co-residents.....
Children (if any)

Background to wearing head veil

What age did you first begin wearing the head veil?

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What was the reason why you began wearing the head veil? (Religious / cultural/
both)

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Was it an easy transition?

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If participant answers 'no', ask:

What could have made it easier?

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Attitudes to wearing head veil

Do you feel the head veil is compatible with UK values? (Yes / no) *If you don't mind could you please tell me more about this?*

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How do you feel about wearing the head veil in the current climate?

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Experiences of wearing head veil

Have you or anyone you know ever experienced discrimination that you felt was directed to you because you cover your head?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

What kind of discrimination did you experience?

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When was this?

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Support

Did you receive help/ support for this?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

Which organisations gave you or anyone you know help?

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Why did you or anyone else need this support? *If you don't mind could you please tell me more about this?*

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Background to wearing face veil

What age did you first begin wearing the face veil?

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What was the reason why you began wearing the face veil? (Religious / cultural/ both)

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Was it an easy transition?

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If participant answers 'no', ask:

What could have made it easier?

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Attitudes to wearing face veil

Do you feel the face veil is compatible with UK values? (Yes / no) *If you don't mind could you please tell me more about this?*

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Experiences of wearing face veil

Have you or anyone you know, ever experienced discrimination that you felt was directed to you because you cover your face?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

What kind of discrimination did you experience?

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When was this?

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Support

Did you receive help/ support for this?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

Which organisations gave you or anyone you know help?

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Why did you or anyone else need this support? *If you don't mind could you please tell me more about this?*

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Experiences of not wearing head/ face veil

What was different when you did not wear head/face veil?

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Did you or someone you know ever feel discriminated against while not wearing head/face veil?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

What kind of discrimination did you experience?

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When was this?

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Support

Did you receive help/ support for this?

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If participant answers 'yes', ask:

Which organisations gave you or anyone you know help?

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Why did you or anyone else need this support? *If you don't mind could you please tell me more about this?*

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Effects of wearing head and/or face veil

What BAD effects, if any, do you think wearing a head veil and/ or face veil has had in your life or the life of anyone else you know?

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What GOOD effects, if any, do you think wearing a head veil and/ or face veil has had in your life or the life of anyone else you know?

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Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience/ feelings on the head/ face veil?

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Administration

Interview finish time:.....

Study on view towards and experiences of various head coverings worn by Muslim women

Huddersfield University Post Graduate Research



Do you have a view on the headscarf or face covering?

Or

Do you have experiences of wearing head or face covering?

*If your answer to either of these questions is 'YES' I would like you to take part in my **confidential** student research project. In either a one to one interview or a focus group discussion at the University*

If you would like any more information, please contact me on: shumveil@hud.ac.uk

University of
HUDDERSFIELD

Appendix 6

Attitudes Towards and Experiences of Muslim Women
Wearing Differing Levels of Head and/or Face Veil

Non-Muslim Interview Schedule

Administrative details

Date:.....
Location:.....
Start time:.....
Tape recorded:.....

Interviewee' socio-demographic characteristics

Name
Age
Ethnicity
Disability.....
Employment status
Job (if employed)
Type of accommodation (e.g. housing/ privately rented/owned...house/flat)....
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Area of residence (specify part of town / village).....
Co-residents.....
Children (if any)

Do you know anyone who adorns the head and or face veil?

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What do you think when you see a woman with a head and /or face veil?

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How would you describe your feelings towards the veil? Positive, negative, neutral?

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Do you understand the perceived reasons why some Muslim women cover?

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Do you understand the concept of veiling for modesty reasons? What are your views on that?

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What does the head/face veil symbolise for you?

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Does the head/ face veil conflict with British values?

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Is it possible to identify as both British and Muslim ?

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Do you support the right of Muslim women to adorn head and face veil?

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Would you say women who wear head and face veil face barriers? if so what kind of barriers?

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Head veil and fashion

Would you say non-Muslim women or women who don't veil face barriers from women who do? If so what kind of barriers?

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Would you support a law restricting the wearing of head veil/ face veil?

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What role does the media play in the portrayal of women who veil?

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Are women who wear head/face veil at more risk of discrimination?

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Have you come across the term 'Islamophobia'? What does it mean to you?

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What are your thoughts on the security of women who veil?

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What are the main issues that affect you about the head and or face veil?

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Appendix 7

Coding labels	Participant: INT3FiroozehDumas	Notes/ ideas
Veiling practices	694 I wear Burkah, headscarf and shawl 698 began wearing four years ago 702 My best friend advised me to wear for religious	Burkah and face veil wearer (recent)
Religion	703 reasons. When I came to this country I saw 704 everyone wearing it but I didn't want to. I didn't	Came to UK after marriage
Religion	705 wear in Bangladesh either 706 for me its about avoiding the hell fire. I'm a 707 Muslim I don't want to show my hair and body I	English not first language
Choice	708 would rather cover up as its an order from God 709 yes it was begin I chose to wear it when I was 710 ready, if I wore it because others were wearing 711 I would have been unhappy	
Security issues	718 In the UK I am scared to wear it now. Current 719 situation is difficult for all Muslims especially 720 women wearing hijab. I feel afraid for all my 721 Muslim friends	Experience differs? Hijab/non-hijab wearers? <i>Compare</i>
Media	722 Media very negative to Muslims. Real Muslims 723 would never harm anyone, but media make all 724 Muslims sound bad	Re-occurring theme?
Fashion accessory	725 its not good but I think its better than not 726 wearing it	
Direct Discrimination	727 No nothing has happened to me, but after	
Security issues	728 Manchester attacks, my daughter said she felt 729 very uncomfortable in Manchester, people were 730 staring at them and giving them dirty looks. Like 731 it was them who were a part of the attack. My 732 daughter said she felt afraid for her own safety	Backlash from Manchester attacks, is this reoccurring theme post terrorist attacks?

Appendix 8

Category: Social Change	
Sub-theme	Description
British values	Participants own or other peoples perception/ views on whether the veil is compatible with British values over time
Veiling practices	Levels and types of veiling
Niqab (face veil) debate	Participants' own /others perception/ views on issues regarding the face veil.
Symbolism- Modesty	Participants own /others perception/views on veiling as an expression of 'modesty'
Islamic fashion	Participants own/others perception/views on veiling as a fashion accessory

Appendix 9

MEMO: 'Social Change'

Definition:

Is head and/ or face veil compatible with British values of, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

Codes

British values; veiling practices; niqab (face veil) debate

Summary of data

- Compatibility of the head and face veil

Participants view the head veil as compatible with British values thus illustrating a desire to identify with the 'Britishness' of these values.

Yes, I don't feel like an outcast from British society. UK is a multicultural society. My headscarf does not impact British values, actually it I think it reflects British values of respect and tolerance. As long as I'm not breaking the law, I am not harming anyone if I cover my head (INT1Ausma).

Yes I do. I think the head veil is fully compatible and in accordance with those values we have a right to choose whether we cover our head or not. Or what clothes we wear. However I do not feel the face veil is compatible in the country (INT5,Samina).

Yes I think it is, we don't bother anyone do we? (INT6Qaisra).

So, although views on the compatibility of the head veil were presented as unproblematic, the face veil was viewed as more problematic.

I feel that women who wear the niqab face a huge amount of discrimination because the English feel their culture is being threatened, I feel the niqab has no place in British society (INT5Samina).

But most [British white people] ok only not liking niqab. I do not feel it is right, when we go Makkah [pilgrimage] we not cover face so why cover here? (FG2, Zakiyah).

Differing cases

One participant who wore both the head and face veil had ambivalent feelings and challenged why it could not be compatible with British values:

Errmm, I don't know if it is or not to be honest. Why not? I'm not breaking the law or harming anyone. It's my right; people should be tolerant with my beliefs as I am with theirs. All I know is it's a part of me so I will continue wearing it (INT3, Tanwi)

The participant had travelled to Pakistan and enrolled on an Islamic course after which she felt the face veil was compulsory.

Points for further consideration

- **Elusiveness:** The term 'British values' were often viewed as ambiguous. While some participants were confident when articulating what the term meant for them, others (especially those for whom English was not a first language) professed to not understanding the term.
- **Compatibility:** Some [Muslim] participants pointed out similarities between British values and Islamic values and thus the ease at relating to them.
- **Negative connotations** from the term 'British values' from an 'othering' perspective.

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